The Black Cat

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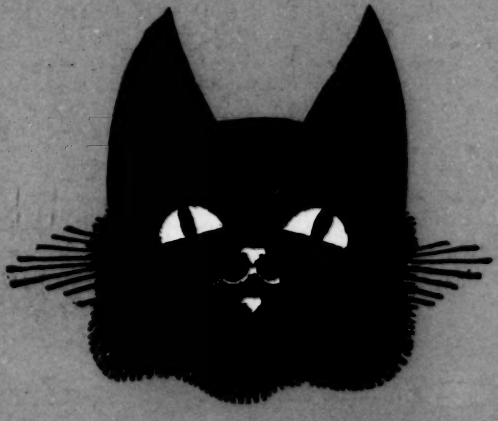

SEPTEMBER 1915

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Harold de Polo

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A Flyer in Sentiment
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"Requiescat in Pace"
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THE SHORTSTORY PUBLISHING COMPANY, SALEM, MASS.

Vol. XX. No. 12.

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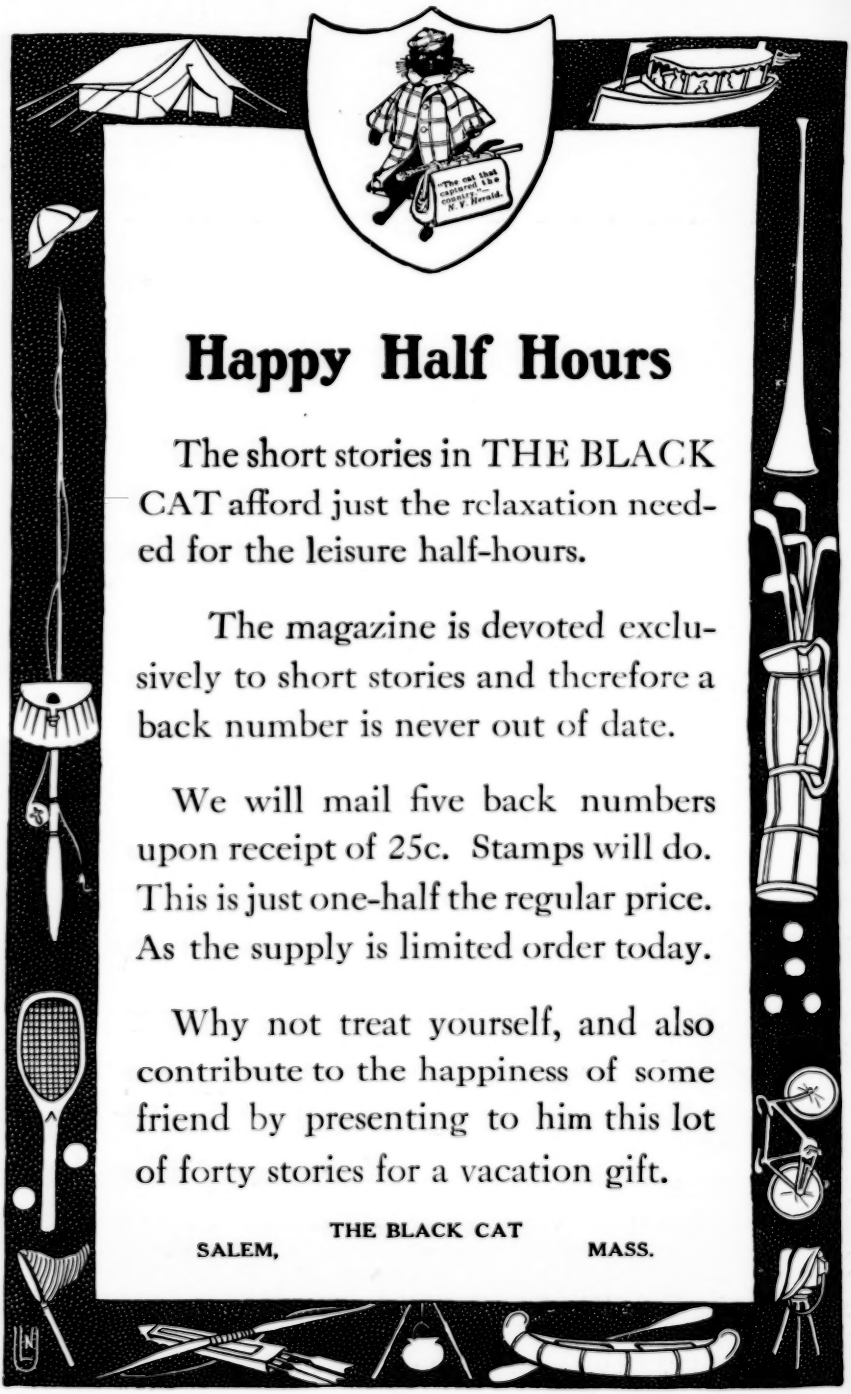

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THE BLACK CAT

SALEM, MASS.

The Black Cat

VOL. XX. No. 12 SEPTEMBER, 1915 10c. a COPY. $1.00 a YEAR

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The Black Cat

Strangers in the City

BY HAROLD DE POLO

They were strangers and Broadway took them in.

A TALL, raw-boned young man with an over-shrewd countenance strolled up Broadway, looking at everyone and everything from between his narrowed lids with an air that usually proclaims the stranger in the city, but his face was not the only thing that stamped him as such.

He wore a ridiculously padded, ill-fitting, gray suit—the kind which *Terry the Tailor*, of 14th Street, sells at $7.89, guaranteed to be all wool as well as to wear for a whole year; his shoes were of patent leather, new, shiny, creaky—already showing white where the splits were coming—they also, bought in the neighborhood of the suit, for $1.98, at *Horowitz's Harrowing Fire Sale*, all goods reduced 65 per cent; while his too large derby, his too loudly patterned tie, and his too small gloves, could surely not have been purchased very far from the suit and shoes—probably at a place where "a big Western failure enabled us to buy entire stock at 25 per cent of actual cost." Yes, decidedly the young man appeared to be fresh from the sweet-smelling fields of new-mown hay, out to see the city, with plenty of money at his disposal.

But the young man, if this was his first visit to the city, had apparently received much good advice from those at home, before starting on his trip, relating to the the numerous wiles and pitfalls which await strangers along that wickedest of wicked thoroughfares—the Great White Way. Several people, indeed, had tried amiably to pick up an acquaintance with him in the Broadway cafés he had entered, but after one long, careful scrutiny of their sleek figures, their shaven jaws; their be-diamonded fingers, their hard eyes, he had quite deliberately told them that although he was from Three Forks, Connecticut, he knew a thing or two, he did, and his name wasn't Silas Babcock if he'd be fooled by any of them durn city grafters. Anyway, they'd better scoot mighty quick or he'd have the constable after them—by gol, he would! Then he would loudly order another drink, proudly extract an immense roll of yellow-backs, and pay the bartender with a grand flourish, murmuring, the while, that there was plenty more

where that came from.

The shrewdest people, though, at one time or another, always meet one who is their match; and Silas Babcock, apparently, was no exception to this rule. He was standing on a street corner and gazing, with awe written over his whole face, at one of New York's tall buildings, seemingly utterly astounded at the height to which it aspired.

Presently he was aware that he was not the only one who was admiring the scenery, for he heard a voice, low and reverent, exclaim in country-bred accents, "Gosh Jerusalem, but ain't that right won'erful?"

He turned quickly to the side, again growing instantly shrewd, and looked at the man who had expressed this sentiment. Then he was immediately reassured. The other was a man of perhaps forty, garbed in the same style as young Silas Babcock, with a new, badly-fitting, padded suit, a pair of creaking shoes, a derby almost a size too large, a wildly loud tie—everything on him, in fact, dubbing him as a stranger in the city, with lots of money in his clothes, out for a grand spree. Yet, although his face was thin and lank and guileless, there was a certain shifty look in his blue-gray eyes which the youngster did not seem to notice.

The older man lowered his head and blushed a trifle, undoubtedly for having allowed his emotions to run away with him. But then, in a moment, he turned to the young man beside him and spoke simply and sincerely. "Say, ain't this a won'erful city—*ain't it, though?*"

Silas Babcock, for the second time, scanned the face and the figure of the other. Finally he was satisfied, and he allowed himself to speak politely, for the first time that day, to a stranger who had tried to make his acquaintance.

"It sure is! It sure is!" he murmured, his voice as low and reverent as that of the other.

"I—I reckoned ye wuzn't o' these here parts; ye—ye didn't look it. Somehow, there's allus a certain—a certain *somethin'* about these Noo York fellers a man kin tell right off, eh?" he said, with a drawling laugh.

"Yep, that's right, all right!" Then, arrogantly, "But I tell you, frien', they can't fool *me*, see? Lord, didn't some six or seven of 'em try to come up an' git aroun' me with their slick talk an' smilin' ways? An' what did I tell 'em? I tole 'em *I* knew all about these here city grafters an' all that, an' that they'd better scoot purty quick or I'd have the constable after 'em, by gol, I would. That's what *I* said," and he puffed out his chest. "Oh, no, they don't fool *me* with their monkey shines."

Had Silas not felt so confident in his powers of insight into human nature, or not been so absolutely pleased with himself, he would have noticed that the older man, for a moment, regarded him with a cynical look of scorn. Yet when he spoke, his face was frank and his voice friendly.

"Say, bub, I'm from out Lonesome Corners way, up the state, here, an' my name's Ebenezer Secor. I—I like ye, bub—ye seem to be a right smart hones' boy," and he held out his hand with a friendly gesture.

The youngster seemed flattered by

the other's praise of him, and he took the hand and shook it warmly. "Min's Babcock—Silas Babcock, from Three Forks, Connecticut."

"Babcock—Babcock?" mused the other. "Uster know a feller by that name onct, on'y he wuzn't from up your way. Come from Noo Hampshire. Jim Babcock was *his* name. Mebbe some relation, eh? No? No kin in Noo Hampshire? Wal, this Jim Babcock wuz certainly a great boy—by Jerusalem, he was a great boy, though! Why, I remember the time when me an' him an' Tubby Jones went on a—" and Mr. Ebenezer Secor started on a long, wild story of what the three of them had once done on a trip to the country village in their younger days; and, when the story was finished, Silas Babcock found his arm linked through that of Ebenezer Secor and they were walking along Broadway as if they had been bosom cronies since their cradle days.

The next thing, of course, was for them to repair to a café and have a drink to cement their friendship. Ebenezer, though, insisted that these Broadway palaces were just a *leetle* too swell for him, and that they'd better meander over to that road where the trolleys ran up in the air. Also, he would drink nothing but good old cider, for he swore that all other drinks were the invention of the devil and no one else. Silas, after his first glass, vowed that the other was right, as he found himself, if one were to judge by this speech, liking this older man very much indeed. He liked him so much, in fact, that he appeared almost heart-broken when Ebenezer allowed he'd have to get along, for he had to see his Cousin Bill, a right smart young fellow with a good job as bookkeeper in a big commission house. But an engagement was made for the next day, when they were to lunch together at young Babcock's hotel, as the latter strenuously insisted.

Silas Babcock, during lunch the next day, seemed to take a still greater liking to his fellow stranger in the city, becoming quite confidential in regard to his aims and hopes in this world. He had, it appeared, just sold the old farm back in Three Forks for twenty thousand dollars and had come to New York in order to make his fortune—a place where he had been told fortunes were easily acquired.

Mr. Ebenezer Secor, after he had talked of many things—especially of the frightful pitfalls awaiting strangers in the city, that Cousin Bill had told him of the other day—apparently deemed it time to start in and begin his work.

He leaned far over the table, glanced cautiously about him in all directions, and, clearing his throat, spoke in a low whisper. "But, kin I trust ye?"

Silas was surprised. "Wal, I *reckon* so," he said, his tone slightly offended.

"That's a' right, bub, don't git on a high horse. I—I tell ye that what I'm going to speak about is purty—purty ticklish work, see? Can't hev no one hear it," and he looked once more about the room.

The youngster's eyes became larger and he leaned over toward Ebenezer with an expectant look on his face. "Aw, I ain't no blabber, an' I reckon I kin be trusted!"

The other, after another slow, careful glance around the whole room, struck the table heavily with his fist. "Wall, first I want ye to r'member that I wouldn't say this less'n ye wuzn't a right clean, nice lookin' boy, a stranger here like I am. Wal, my cousin Bill, what I'm stayin' with—Bill Edwards—knows a young feller what's a telegraft op'rator that's—that's tapped the wire that comes from the races, see? They got a little flat all fixed up in Harlem—they calls it—understand? Wal, when I come into the city a few days ago, an' asked Cousin Bill the best way to lay out a few hunder dollar, he tells me o' this here frien' o' his an' hisself. They both bin doin' the thing, on'y the trouble is they ain't got much money. Wal, I went up there an' they tapped the first race, see? Wal, by gum, a horse by the name o' Firefly wins at what Bill sez is three to one. He tells me to hand him some money quick an' that he kin run right aroun' the corner an' up two blocks an' place it with a—a bookie, I think he sez—what wuz doin' bizness over there. Me bein' a pesky cautious critter, I on'y give him a hunder dollar, an' blamed if that Bill didn't come back in 'bout half an hour with my hunder dollar an' *three hunder dollar more!* Yessir, b'gum, he did—yessir!"

Silas Babcock's face, as he listened, had grown white and red by turns, and he muttered almost inaudibly about the great fortune that he would be able to make if he could get into this game. "Yep, yep! Go on, go on," he said, his breath coming in short gasps.

The other, again, allowed his eyes to regard the youngster with a cynical look of scorn which was not noticed. "Wal," he continued, "that wuz just three days ago, an' sence then, bub, the four hunder dollar I had when I come into town hez gone to *sixteen hunder*—yessir, sixteen hunder, what d'ye know about *that,* eh? An' that's after I give Cousin Bill an' Tom Derrick—he's the telegraft op'rator—four hunder dollar fer helpin' me make it, too. Oh, I tell ye, young feller, I'll make a big fortune out o' my leetle roll, a'right, a'right, afore *I'm* through! Yessir, you jest bet I will," and Ebenezor Secor winked his eye knowingly and burst into a cackling laugh.

Silas's eyes were almost popping from his head. "By Gee—*by Gee,*" he said, "but that sure is great!"

The older man seemed to deliberate for a moment; then, clicking his jaws as if he had come to a decision, he narrowed his eyes and whispered to his young friend. "But, I tole ye that I thought ye a nice, clean, hones' feller, see? Wal, now, I like ye, by gum, an' I don't see any reason why Cousin Bill shouldn't give ye a chanct as he give me; ye'll hev to give him *somethin'* o' what ye win, o' course. Anyway, by gum, I'm goin' to take ye up there this afternoon, if ye want, an' we'll see what we can do, eh?"

Silas Babcock, wary as he had been of all the grafters who had tried to pick an acquaintance with him in the Broadway cafés, fell for the man before him as easily as rotten apples fall from a tree. "Say—say," he asked, "d'you mean it?"

"Sure I do, bub, an' I tell ye that ye'll hev a fortune in no time, by Jeru-

salem! We *both* will, eh?" and he cackled happily.

The youngster seemed to be overcome at the brightness of the future. "Gee—*gee*," was all that he could say, his voice awed, his mouth gaping.

Ebenezer Secor laid his hand affectionately on his shoulder. "Well, bub, I tell ye we'll both hev a fine house on Fifth Av'noo afore long, eh? Wal, let's git up there now, an', by gum, sonny, I'm goin' to be like one o' them real swell rich fellers jest fer onct an' ride up in one o' them taxi-wagons. Come on!"

Silas, after a ride of almost an hour in a taxi—which he declared was the first he had ever had in all his life—found himself let out before a flat house in a long row of others which looked exactly alike. Then, after the chauffeur had been paid, Ebenezer Secor escorted him up four flights of dark, narrow stairs, knocked at a door in a certain, peculiar way, and in a moment they were both admitted.

Introductions followed, and then Ebenezer told Cousin Bill and Tom Derrick how he wanted his young friend let in on the game; and in less than five minutes it was decided that he could benefit by their knowledge if he would but give them just twenty-five per cent of his winnings. To this he hastily agreed, saying that it certainly was fair for them to have that amount. Then they talked of how much he would play that day, as Cousin Bill had to have the money so that he might rush out on the instant he heard the returns from the first race. Ebenezer gave his cousin every single dollar that he had, as he said that he wanted to make his fortune quickly; Cousin Bill and Tom Derrick put down their last cent, and Silas finally decided that he would that day take a fling at the game with a thousand dollars.

After several moments of pleasant conversation, Derrick looked at his watch and said that the first race would be here very shortly, and, going to a door in the room, he opened it and entered the closet, where Silas saw numerous wires and a telegraph board, of which he vowed he knew nothing.

Presently, Silas heard the telegraph instrument start clicking, and, in a moment more, Derrick rushed from the cramped closet and bawled out the result, his face heated with excitement, his voice hoarse: "First at Pimlico. Simple Maid, the favorite, wins at eight to five. Quick, Edwards, for God sakes beat it over to the bookie's and get the money down. Run!"

Young Silas watched the whole thing with amazement. Cousin Bill instantly flew to the door, flung it open, and rushed madly down the steps, running as if his very life were at stake.

Ebenezer rubbed his hands and clapped Silas on the shoulder. "Well, bub, reckon we'll have a leetle roll afore long, eh? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, I guess we will, Mr. Secor," said Derrick, his face glowing happily.

In about half an hour their prophecy was fulfilled, for Cousin Bill, with a monstrous smile on his large face, entered the room and pulled out an immense wad from his pocket.

"Well, Mr. Babcock," he said, coming over to the youngster first, "I con-

gratulate you on your first day's work. You get sixteen hundred for your thousand, eh? Good. Twenty-five per cent of that is four hundred, leaving you just twelve hundred to the good. Well, here we are, my boy, twelve hundred winnings and one thousand original stakes—twenty-two hundred!"

Young Silas Babcock could do nothing but look at the money. He counted it, fondling each bill gently and lovingly, at least five at six times. Finally he spoke, his voice vibrant with exultation.

"Say—say, ca—can I play again tomorrow—can I—can I?"

"You sure can," answered Cousin Bill, with vehemence, and Silas once more started in to count and fondle his money; while the three others, for an instant, winked at one another very, very gravely.

The young stranger in the city, when his friend Ebenezer Secor called for him—again in a taxi—at about one o'clock the next afternoon, rushed forward and greeted him with such great enthusiasm as to make the clerk at the desk of the cheap little hotel think that his guest must surely have found a long lost brother.

Once seated in the taxi, Silas eagerly explained that he had that morning drawn out every single cent that he owned, and was going to play the whole twenty-one thousand dollars on the first race that day; all of which made a queer, extremely pleased light shine in the eyes of his kind friend—for never in the world had he ever found an easier sucker.

Again they stopped at the red-and-white brick flat house that looked like all the others in the row; again they climbed the four flights of stairs, and again the peculiar knock was given on the door.

Once inside, Silas immediately, with great glee, told Cousin Bill of his twenty-one thousand dollar bet—causing the eyes of Bill and Derrick to light up with a queer sort of gladness.

Then, after a few moments, he took from his hip pockets two large bundles, broke the strings that held them, and very slowly and carefully counted into the hand of Cousin Bill exactly twenty-one packages of one thousand dollars each, telling him to be sure and get it all on the first race.

Cousin Bill, when the money was in his hands, did not wait long before stuffing it into his pockets, assuring Silas that it would not be long before he would have a far greater amount. Bill's cousin, also, gave him three thousand, saying that it was all that he had.

Again, as yesterday, Tom Derrick presently looked at his watch, said that the returns from the first race should come in very quickly, and made his way into the little closet in the wall, Silas's eyes following him hungrily.

The keys, very shortly, began to click, causing the youngster to tremble like a leaf in the wind—for ah, fortune was so near him now, getting nearer every second, in fact, as he volubly and excitedly explained.

The ticking stopped, the closet door was flung open, and Derrick rushed forth with a wild light in his eyes. "My God," he yelled, his voice high, "my God! Susan B. wins the first

at Pimlico at *four to one!"*

Ebenezer let out a roar, Silas let out a roar, and Cousin Bill, as he vanished through the door, howled happily; and for several moments, inside the room, the three talked about the immense fortune that they would make before many days had passed, while all the time Silas was hopping about the room as if he were truly going mad.

"Guess I'll see what's happening in the second, even if we're not playing it," said Derrick, and went into the little closet.

In barely a moment he returned, his face ashen, his body bent nearly double, his knees shaking and almost refusing to support his body.

"What—what's troublin' ye, Tom?" asked Ebenezer, going over to his side and putting his arms around his shoulder—while his other hand went to his hip pocket in case anything happened after Tom had spoken.

"The—the—" started Derrick, but could go no farther.

"Come, come, bubby, speak out like a man," said Ebenezer, good-naturedly, as young Silas looked on wonderingly.

Derrick's voice was hoarse. "There's been a—a *mistake*! We're lost, lost, lost, I tell you," he screamed. "Susan B. was disqualified and—and—and Starlight—*Starlight won!* Oh, my God, we're lost, lost, *lost,"* and he broke down and sobbed like a child. . . *"What?"* yelled Ebenezer. *"What?" Jerusalem—Jerusalem!* Susan B. don't win—*Susan B.* don't win? I'm a broke man, I'm a broke man. All I had in the worl' has bin took from me! Susan B. don't win—*she don't win,"* and he leaned heavily against the wall and held his head in his hand but yet he eyed his victim sharply and kept one hand ready to draw his gun at the sign of the least trouble.

But the sorrow of Ebenezer and Derrick was as nothing compared to that of Silas Babcock. He raved, he howled, he swore, he threatened to have the law on the bookie, until finally, mostly from exhaustion, he sobbed and sobbed as if his heart would break, writhing about as if he were suffering acute agony. And, had he been looking at the two others, he would have seen that they were smiling with a most damnable joy.

But, when he very slowly and painfully arose from the floor, their faces were as long and tear-stained as his own. His voice, when he spoke, was hoarse and hollow, almost uncanny, and his eyes seemed glazed and dead.

"I—I reckon I'm done for. I ain't got another cent in God's whole world. Pa's dead, Ma's dead, an' the other kin back to home won't hev nothin' to do with me 'cause I went an' sold the ole farm that Pa left me. I—I—I don't know—know what—what I'm goin'—goin' to do," he ended lamely, and stood staring into space.

Ebenezer Secor came forward and placed his hand affectionately on his shoulder. "I—I'm right sorry, bub—I am; but look at *me,* too, an' I'm a older man 'n ye are, boy. Ye've got yer good, soun', young health an' husky muscle an'—an' I'm past forty. Yep, bub, we've both had a hard deal—we've *all* had a hard deal—but God take care of us an' give us better luck next time," he said, his voice slow and pained.

Silas, his head bowed, put out his

hand. "I'm—I'm goin' now—goin' back an' try to git work on a farm. Good—good-bye, I reckon you'll be waitin' fer yer Cousin Bill—pore feller, *he* don't know about it yit!" He sighed heavily, shook the other's hand once more, and walked to the door, leaving the two behind him to think that they were almost dreaming at the easiness with which they had dispatched their latest victim.

Silas slowly unlocked the door and flung it open. But instead of passing through it, he suddenly sprang about and faced the two in the room, a shining revolver in his hand, as well as in the hands of the two men who stood silently behind him. He looked, somehow, vastly different; for his face, instead of being so thoroughly innocent, was cold, and hard, and experienced. His voice did not drawl; it snapped.

"Throw up your hands, there, Hayseed Barney! And you, too, Telegraph Jim. Huh, you cheap grafters, you! I've been trying to get you for a good six months—trying to put the stuff over on you, and now I have. Huh, you cheap wire men—you pikers! Throw—up—your—hands!"

Before the battery of three leveled revolvers most men will obey that order—and the two inside were no exception to this rule. They did, their faces wonder-struck and gaping.

The person who had called himself Silas Babcock spoke to the men behind him. "Did you get Shifty Eddie, boys?"

"Sure, caught him right down in the front hall as he was going out!"

"Good! Did you get all the conversation in here down on paper?"

"Yes!"

"Good!"

Then, to Hayseed Barney and Telegraph Jim, with a little bow and smile, "Gentlemen, allow me to introduce myself, James Smith," and he unbuttoned his vest and displayed his secret service badge.

Thistledown

BY JOSEPH MacKIE

Believing himself stained with the brand of Cain a man flies from the law and is lost in the mesh of Fate.

JEAN ROUILLE stopped and stared. Then he rubbed his eyes and stared again. Then he stepped closer to the monument and looked again. For fully a minute he stood motionless, his mouth open, his fingers twitching, a moisture gathering on his forehead. At last he seemed satisfied that the thing he saw was really there. He looked around fearfully, up and down the street. There was no one in sight. Once more his eyes sought the markings on the white stone. "JEAN ROUILLE" he read. That was all. Just his name, but it was carved in big letters within a foot of the official looking notice which proclaimed that a fine of five hundred francs or six months' imprisonment or both, would be inflicted on any person found guilty of defacing that particular monument.

He read the notice over slowly, word after word. Then he read the bold signature of the commandant of the fort. He could see the grim walls of the fort at the foot of the street. He could see a sentry pacing back and forth. Slowly his mind worked over the thing. Five hundred francs! That was a lot of money. He did not believe there was that much money in the whole village, unless perhaps M. Panet, the notary, had it; he wore spectacles and his hair was grey. Jean had gone there when he got his license to be married the year before. Marie, what would she say? What would she do? Six months in jail. Six months away from his wife, away from his little farm. Who would take care of her? Who would do the work?

Fascinated, his eyes went back to the crudely formed letters of his name. Who had done this? It was not there the night before, for he had passed that very place on his way to sell some eggs to the innkeeper. During the night some one, some enemy, had taken a knife or some sharp instrument and laboriously carved his name in the stone. Who? Why? He could not imagine.

Then Jean had an idea. Perhaps no one had seen it yet. With his knife he might alter the letters so they could not tell whose name it was. He stepped closer, took the knife out of his pocket and opened it. The stone was hard. His hand trembled. He made a long slash across the JEAN. Then another. Tiny fragments dropped into his mouth and eyes. He paused in his feverish hacking to wipe the sweat from his face. He heard a shout. With knife upraised he turned and looked.

A soldier was running up the street

toward him. Close behind was another. Farther back several of the villagers were coming. They were shouting and pointing to him. The knife clattered on the pavement. His hand dropped to his side. He wheeled and took to his heels. Around a house—up an alley—across a field and into the woods. At the edge he looked back. Half a dozen gendarmes were just starting over the field toward him. Around the monument a crowd had collected. He could see them pointing at his name and then up the street in the direction he had fled. Some of them he recognized; he could make out the great hulking form of Pierre, the idiot. He plunged into the forest.

An old trail led him through a tangled swamp and up a steep hill. At the top he paused to get his breath, and looked back again. One of his pursuers had gained on him, was almost at the foot of the hill. Jean picked up a large rock, and more with the idea of frightening than anything else, threw it with all his might at the soldier. To his horror, the man flung his arms up with a cry and dropped to the ground. From where he stood, Jean could see blood on his head. With a gasp he turned and ran down the hill. He was a murderer! Madly he tore through the underbrush.

For a while, the way was familiar. As a boy, he had played in the forest, and most of the roads that wound around the swamps and hills were as plain as the streets in the village, but he avoided the beaten paths and took to the wilder woods. His sole idea was to get away; to run as fast as he could, as long as he could, then to rest until the pounding in his breast stopped a little, and listen. Faint cries he could hear in the distance and once he heard a shot, but he seemed to have thrown them off his track for none of the sounds were near.

He had covered several miles in his first headlong flight and now he stopped to get his bearings. He would go south, for to the south was Paris. He had never been in Paris, but in that city of millions he knew he might hide; he might find employment and then send a message to Marie, perhaps have her come to Paris. And so he trudged along, mile after mile. When he was hungry, he stole from the farmhouses that he passed: fruit from the orchards; eggs; now and then he caught a chicken and devoured it ravenously.

After the first night of exhaustion, he slept but little, for his slumber was disturbed by strange, fantastic dreams. A great tall pillar of stone would be falling on him. Then it would turn into a soldier with a bloody head, who was carving his name in letters of fire on the door of his home. He would awaken with a cry and looking up into the heavens, see the stars form themselves into the letters of JEAN ROUILLE. He grew to hate the thought of it and took to calling himself other names aloud. He would stop before a tree and say, "I am Jacques Bonneville, son of the grocer. No, I do not know Jean Rouille, I never heard of him." It amused him, and often he found himself laughing outright at the clever deception.

Had he been possessed of a more

active imagination, those first two days might have deprived him of reason, but the immense loneliness of the woods at night, the strange, uncanny sounds of the forest, the ever present fear of capture, made but little impression on his stolid nature.

Toward the close of the third day, there came to Jean a feeling that he was being followed. The crackling of a dry twig behind him, the startled flight of a bird, the unexplainable sense of a presence that he could neither see nor hear, brought a fear that he could not shake off. He stopped suddenly, and plainly heard the crunching of a footstep on the gravel of the creek bottom. A moment he stood, and though he could hear nothing more than the thumping of his heart, he became panic-stricken, and turning, dashed wildly through the brush like a frightened deer, carrying branches and leaves with him, stumbling over roots, bumping against trees, until at last his trembling legs refused to carry him farther and he fell sobbing to the ground.

With his head pillowed in his arms, he lay for some time, trembling with fear. Then he raised his head and looked around. Save for the happy song of some wild bird, that somehow filled him with a vague sense of anger, he could hear nothing. He rose to go and turning, dashed wildly through the bushes, listening intently. The bird ceased its song. For a moment there was absolute silence; it was as though nature were holding its breath, and then came a laugh—a horrid, mirthless, croaking laugh, like nothing human that he had ever heard before. He sprang to his feet, and there, staring through the leaves, not twenty feet from him, was a face—a face that he recognized as that of Pierre Lamont, the idiot, but distorted now with hatred and passion, and in the eyes, the light of madness. The harmless imbecile was transformed into a maniac.

Jean's tortured mind sought no reason for the change, nor did he think it strange that the other should be there. There was almost a feeling of relief that he knew who had been pursuing him, and he stepped forward. "Hello, Pierre," he called out, and then stopped in his tracks, for Pierre, with a snarl, jumped at him. Jean saw the blazing eyes, the bared teeth, and knew he must fight for his life.

Pierre was taller and heavier, and the strength of insanity was his. He caught Jean with an animal-like ferocity that almost swept him off his feet, but Jean withstood the shock, and fought desperately to keep those clawing fingers from his throat. Again and again, he struck at the ugly face so near his own. Once his fist crashed full into the half open mouth. The thick lips were split and torn and Jean's hand came away covered with blood, but still he smashed at the thing that clung to him. Then they fell, and Jean was on top. He fastened the fingers of both hands in the bare throat beneath him, with a vise-like grip. Pierre was weakening. His struggles were less violent; finally they stopped and his arms dropped beside him. A moment longer, and Jean released his hold. There was a convulsive jerk of the limbs, a faint cough.

Jean arose from his knees, panting; his clothes covered with blood and dirt. Then he realized that Pierre was not breathing. He leaned over and shook him, listened for the beat of his heart, but he had done his work well. Pierre, the fool, was dead.

Jean sat down and looked at the body. To his heavy, slow-working brain it all seemed like a dream. He thought of all that had happened. There was his name on the monument. He had not put it there, but was merely trying to efface it. They had seen him and, naturally, he had run away. Intending to frighten a soldier, he had thrown a stone and killed him. Now, struggling for his life, he had strangled Pierre. Why had all this come to him? He looked up at the blue of the heavens, as though trying to find there the answer to the riddle.

For a long time, he sat thinking, and at last he made his plan. Here was the body of Pierre. He would exchange clothes and make his way back home. He would wait in the woods until dark and then in the dusk creep across the fields to his house. If he were seen, they would think it was Pierre and would not question him, for no one paid any attention to the doings of the fool. Then he would tell Marie all about it, take a little money that he had saved, and arrange for her to come to Paris in a few months, when things had quieted down.

His mind made up, he at once started to work. It took but a few minutes to make the change of clothes, and while those of Pierre did not fit him very well, they were different from his own, and he felt sure that at a distance, or if he could partly hide his face, he would not be recognized. He made a shallow grave for the body, and covered it with stones, so that no prowling beasts could disturb it. Then he washed his face and started on the long journey home.

A few days later, he found himself once more in a country that was familiar and he proceeded more cautiously. He was tired, for he had walked a good many miles with but little to eat, so when he came to the hill near the clearing, he sought a secluded spot, laid down to wait until dark, and fell asleep.

He awoke an hour or so later, much refreshed, and while it was still daylight, he resolved to walk to the edge of the woods and look at the village. Except that there were rather more people about than usual, all was quiet and peaceful. He could see his little cottage with its neatly kept yard and the flowers, and he strained his eyes for a glimpse of Marie, but in vain. He was about to retrace his steps deeper into the woods to await nightfall, when he heard a shout behind him, almost immediately answered by another on his right. The instinct to flee, that had lately become almost a part of his nature, once more took possession of him, and he ran. A soldier barred his way in the narrow path and he turned into the woods. A shot whizzed through the leaves above his head. He seemed to be surrounded, and he purposely showed himself once or twice in the hope that they would see the clothes of Pierre. But if they noticed, it made no apparent difference. He could not un-

derstand that. It never occurred to him to give himself up. He had escaped before easily enough, he could again. Rapidly he made his way through the swamp. When he came to the hill, he turned to go around it. A gendarme who was waiting, levelled his rifle and fired.

He was still alive when they picked him up, and they made a rough stretcher of the limbs of trees and carried him to the village. At the main street, the crowd was so dense they were forced to stop for a moment while the soldiers cleared the way. One of the villagers leaned over to look at the pale face, and straightened up with a startled exclamation. "It is not Pierre; it is Jean Rouille!" and "It is Jean Rouille!" was passed from lip to lip, as they carried him into the apothecary shop.

Faster than wires could have carried it, spread the news through the quiet little village and to the cottage near the edge of the field. By the time the doctor had completed his examination and announced that it was a matter of a few minutes, Marie was there on her knees by the still form. Into Jean's eyes came a light of recognition and he feebly took her hand. They were forced to lean over to hear the words that came.

"I did not—put my name on the—monument. I did not—mean to kill the—soldier. I had to kill Pierre—or he would have killed me. He—he was mad."

"But Jean," the kindly priest was talking now, "Jean, we know. It was Pierre who carved your name. He boasted of it before you had been gone ten minutes and when they tried to arrest him, he stabbed one of the gendarmes to death and fled into the woods. They were searching for him when they saw you and those clothes—listen Jean, you did not kill the soldier. He fell over a root and cut his head; it was nothing; he helped carry you here."

"And Jean," added the doctor, as the puzzled eyes grew dimmer, "there is a reward of a thousand francs for Pierre Lamont, dead or alive."

The tired face softened into a smile, turned ever so slightly to the one he loved, and as quietly as a thistledown, the soul of Jean was gone.

A Flyer in Sentiment

BY J. BERNARD LYNCH

A pawnshop is the last place in the world where you would look for sentiment, but human nature is human nature the world over.

THE proprietor of the three golden balls finished reading the millionaire's life story. Laying aside the newspaper, he gazed reminiscently through the plate-glass window into Boston's busiest street.

"Envious?" I asked. "Or don't you like the yarn?"

"It reads well," was the reply, "but there's a slight omission."

"What's missing?"

"Six months of interesting history."

I looked expectant.

"This man and I," he continued, "became acquainted on a cold, blustering day in fall. It was on an equally cold and stormy day in spring that we severed all business—or social—relations. That signifies nothing. Coincidences seldom do—still, we're all given to seeking 'em—even in the weather.

"The first time he called, he pawned a ring. It was a fine diamond—large and still good. His name was Harry Brown. A week later, he came again and offered several other valuable rings, which I took, giving him the *quid pro quo*. His name was still Harry Brown. On both occasions he entered and left this place with the air of a man who had committed a great crime. No, this did not excite my suspicion. It merely enabled me to classify him as a customer who considered pride his last asset and poverty his first disgrace.

"A man in my line, to be successful, must study human nature and sit in the judgment seat before character. In Harry Brown, I seemed to see the fallen aristocrat. He was one of those who had been forced to take a seat on the financial toboggan. To him life was a steep hill, easy to slide down, difficult to climb up.

"With each succeeding week, we got better acquainted, and, incidentally, I became the custodian of a large amount of his personal property.

"At the end of five months, Harry Brown appeared to have disposed of everything he considered worth requesting me to loan money on. He had been absent a week, when, one evening just before closing time, his now rather well-known face peered at me over the counter. I say 'well-known,' yet it was not the face of the Harry Brown who had brought the diamond ring to me that cold, blustering day in fall. This man was wan, with peaked features, and his slightly worried look had turned to the hunted expression of one who fears every turn of fortune. Under his arm was a bundle. This he unwrapped with nervous fingers, disclosing a dress suit.

"'How much on this?' he asked hoarsely.

"'Not more than a dollar,' I replied. You see, dress suits are a drug in my particular market. Half a hundred adorn my shelves, and will continue to adorn them, while fashions change, braid meanders up trouser legs and then meanders off again, waistcoats approach the chin and anon shrink to belts, spiketails wax and wane. Few men are like Harry Brown, and keep their 'soup and fish' to offer the pawnbroker last of all valuables. Being a luxury it, as a rule, is the first thing to be brought me.

"Brown regarded the contents of the bundle with fifty times the sentiment he had spent upon that splendid diamond or those beautiful rings. Then, with a sigh, he remonstrated.

"'Man,' he said, 'a hundred dollars was paid for the making of those clothes.'

"'Can't help it,' I replied brusquely. 'It's the best I can do. And talk quick, for it's most closing time.'

"After all, when a man's hungry, he will seldom quibble.

"'Give me the dollar,' he cried, and turned away.

"'Name and address?' I returned.

"'Harry Brown,' he mumbled, for the first time hesitating over the name. 'Same address as before.'

"Taking the ticket and the dollar, he hurried out with the air of one fleeing from something disagreeable.

"I thought I should never see him again, he wore an air of so much disgust with the whole proceeding, but he came again, two days later. His personal appearance had grown a shade worse, and his face exuded despair, he stood with his back to the street, while I attended to the wants of another customer, and did not come forward until the door had closed and we had the shop to ourselves. Then he advanced with a false jauntiness and 'Good evening, sir,' he greeted me, in an obvious effort to be pleasant. 'I'm running short on my resources,' he continued; 'how much on my overcoat?'

"'Take it off,' I requested, hardening my heart in the face of what I considered his attempt to curry sympathy. Upon examining the garment, I felt myself justified in offering three dollars. An overcoat was a good risk, for we were experiencing severe March weather.

"While I wrote out the ticket, it occurred to me to mention the expirations of his previous loans.

"'By the way,' I said, rather sternly, 'you have paid no interest on your loans. After four months, we are authorized by law to sell the collateral for the amount loaned and accrued interest.'

"'That applies to—what?' he inquired, in some excitement.

"'To all the articles brought in last autumn,' was my reply. 'I think there was a diamond and other jewelry.'

"He waved his hand carelessly. 'Yes, yes, I know,' he answered. 'Hold them for a week or so longer; I'll make good. You see, my ship hasn't come in yet. Rough weather is keeping her in the offing.'

"'Ah,' I thought to myself, 'you are very cool over the possible loss of your gems. I believe if it were that paltry dress suit you would show

a trifle more feeling.'

"Perhaps it was the anomaly of a man so obviously at the end of his rope, venturing to think of romance rather than reality, that caused me to glance outside, where a March snowstorm and a biting wind were making life wretched for pedestrians and impeding traffic. And then I had to glance back at the man who found it necessary to brave the elements without an overcoat.

"You may well suppose I'm pretty well hardened to privation, but for a moment sympathy rode me rough shod.

" 'Tough night to face without an overcoat,' I ventured.

" 'One has to eat,' he replied, with a momentary bristling of spirit. 'Bad weather, like other bad conditions, won't always endure.'

"I passed him ticket and money, which he grasped eagerly, then, turning up his coat collar, he wished me a goodnight that was almost cheery, and hurried into the storm.

"In three days he was back again, with an amazing proposition. He wanted to pawn the suit he was wearing.

" 'But man,' I exclaimed, 'what have you to put on?'

" 'Nothing,' he answered, 'but it seemed to me that this was a fairly good outfit, and perhaps you would give me a dollar and an old suit in exchange. I had only one meal yesterday,' he faltered, 'and no breakfast as yet, today.'

"From a business standpoint, the proposition did not appeal. The clothes, once good, were now shabby and mis-shapen. Sympathy, however, once you give it a root, is bound to grow like a weed, even in this seemingly inclement atmosphere of mine. Without reflecting much, I agreed to his proposal.

"Handing him a suit but slightly worse than his own, I sent him into the back room to change. He was long coming out. I spied on him, and found him viewing himself critically in the mirror. The reflection seemed not to please him, for even his assumed air of hopefulness was absent.

"After his departure, I set myself to work checking off expired loans and preparing them for sale. Among them, I placed some of the effects of my aristocratic customer, for I could not believe there was any chance of their redemption. And then I had to do some act of seeming harshness, if only as an antidote for my recent excess sympathy.

"The dress suit, likewise, called for attention. It had up to then remained in the bundle as he had brought it, and must now be prepared to join its half hundred companions. I turned the coat and found the label of a fashionable tailor sewed into the pocket. There was something else there, also—a date of purchase, less than a year before and the name—John Hodge! Hurriedly seeking the overcoat and the suit just abandoned, I found they, too, bore the label of the same tailor, but neither claimed to be the property of John Hodge.

"Here was a nice state of affairs. I realized that my carelessness in not making so close an examination as usual of these articles, had affected my daily report to the district police station. The omitted information

formed basis for a somewhat grave offence. I instantly tried to make amends by mailing a special report on the matter.

"Just before closing, as I was hanging the old suit, last pawned, in the wardrobe kept for such inferior garments, the hanger caught in the coat lining, and when I jerked it impatiently, tore it from shoulder to pocket. Just below the left lapel, something white crackled, and I drew out what appeared to be a letter. There was no envelope and I soon discerned what had happened. In removing his effects he had probably taken the envelope, not noticing that the missive itself had escaped through a hole in the pocket and wandered off between tweed and lining. All collateral being the pawnbroker's property, I had no compunction in reading the following note, written on Hotel Touraine stationery:

'Dear John:—

In view of all things, I am quite unable to understand your six months' silence. I have sought and been given the privilege of inviting you to Mrs. Gardner's dance, when there will be a chance for you to seek—and give—an explanation.

The dance—as of course you know—is at the Copley-Plaza, March thirtieth.

Shall I reserve the goodnight waltz?

Yours always (I mean it),

Marion.'

"This was the twenty-ninth. If Harry Brown and John Hodge were, as I dimly suspected, the same person, and if John and Marion had fallen out about the time John's fortunes began to ebb, the time was short before they would make up and be friends, or lovers, again. It was a pretty romance; the chief obstacle to a happy denouement being only a certain dress suit hanging in my moth-ball and camphored cedar chest. I shook my head, as I shut and tried the street door. After all, his ship was still in the offing. Very little chance had Brown-Hodge, even if his inclinations were that way, for attending that dance and claiming his Marian's goodnight waltz.

"The next day was an unusually rough one. Snow and sleet alternated, accompanied by a fierce wind. To other folks, it was a stormy day; to me, in spite of my stern determination, it resolved itself into the day of Mrs. Gardner's dance. I had never suspected myself of maudlin tendencies, but now I knew.

"About four, my acquaintance of the two names came in. He seemed in good spirits, and there were noteworthy changes in his appearance. He had invested in a shine, and a clean shave as well; he sported an immaculate shirt and collar, and wore the kind of white tie that goes with evening dress. The attention paid to these matters had lent dignity to the old suit from out my stock. In his eyes, though grown large with suffering, there was born the expression of the man who had learned again to hope.

" 'I must ask you to do me a favor,' he began, as I came from behind my desk.

" 'Ah ha,' thinks I to myself, 'you're after the dress clothes. You are going to ask me to forgive the interest.'

" 'I want to attend a dance this evening,' he went on.

"I nodded, not feeling free to tell him I knew nearly as much about it as he did.

" 'I must have that dress suit.'

" 'Certainly. Of course.' And in

pretended haste I opened my book. 'The amount is—'

"'Never mind what it is,' he interrupted. 'My capital is fifty cents.'

"I affected not to hear. 'You received a dollar loan,' I exclaimed, when I had located the item. 'With the interest there is a balance of one dollar and thirty-three cents to be paid before I can release the suit.'

"'My capital is fifty cents,' he said in a pleading tone.

"'I can't help that,' I replied. 'Men in my line can't do business on sentiment, or make loans on general principles. We must have collateral.'

"'I might leave you the suit I am wearing,' he suggested.

"''Tisn't worth the difference.'

"He turned to the door with slow, faltering steps. It was evident that his disappointment was keen. In a flash it came to me that instead of being a pawnbroker doing business on business principles, I was a master of destiny. The quarrel with Marion dated itself as the beginning of his calls on me. He had kept the dress suit until the last of his offerings, apart from the clothes he was actually wearing. He had exhibited more sorrow at its loss than in any other transaction. Had he been waiting all this time for a sign from Marion—had he kept the evening clothes so as to appear before her with as much bravery as of yore? And had her message come too late—everlastingly too late?

"It's a fact that a pawnbroker can't afford sympathies, but all sorts of men enjoy pleasures they can ill afford, from champagne on a beer income, down. My sympathy, in this case, represented an expenditure of eighty-three cents. I decided to go the limit. I would indulge myself in eighty-three cents' worth of sentiment. We may not all have Marions, but we may all sympathize with those who have.

"In the book of profit and loss, I marked the deficit as invested in the stock of Hodge, and called him back.

"'Take your suit,' I cried. In the concession I felt greater joy than in giving candy to a child.

"His face lighted and an appearance of physical vigor came over his body. Thanking me, he hurried to the back room.

"In twenty minutes, he emerged metamorphosed and completely at odds with his surroundings.

"I anticipated another attempt to express gratitude by handing him the note found in the old suit—Marion's invitation. His face expressed great surprise as he grabbed it, and by his seeking and finding an envelope into which the paper fitted, I saw that I had been correct in my belief that he did not know of his loss.

"'It had slipped under the lining,' I observed, with assumed carelessness.

"'Yes. I—er suppose you—er—'

"'Oh, yes,' I laughed, 'of course I read it. That is, I saw it was a friendly note addressed to John Somebody. Friend of yours?'

"He grabbed at the opening and nodded. At the same time, he looked worried, as if he did not understand whither events were hurrying him. His mouth twitched nervously and he was paler than he should have been at so slight a discovery. After all, what was it that a friend—such as I trusted I had shown myself to be—had inad-

vertently perused a love letter? But I was so overcome with pity at his confusion that I recklessly shoved a dime into his hand, muttering, 'Buy a package of cigarettes. You need a smoke before the dance.' Then I fairly pushed him into the night. In dress suit and silk hat he marched resolutely through the storm.

"Ten minutes later, Police Inspector Shields walked into my place and 'Let me see that dress suit tagged John Hodge and pawned by Harry Brown,' he demanded.

" 'Haven't got it.'

" 'Haven't got it? Why, you made a special report on it only last night.'

" 'Man took it out quarter of an hour ago.'

"He frowned and reprimanded me for carelessness in making the original report. To assuage his wrath I remarked, 'I've got a lot of other stuff left by Brown.'

" 'What sort of stuff?'

" 'Diamond ring; several other rings; watch.'

" 'Something queer,' he remarked, after an examination. 'This looks like loot, but the dress suit was the only thing Hodge reported as stolen.'

" 'Hodge reported!' I exclaimed. 'Why, in my opinion, Hodge and Brown are the same person.'

" 'This report,' he replied acidly, 'does not lean toward your opinion. Hodge himself has reported the theft;' a man would hardly put himself under suspicion of stealing his own clothes and run the risk of going to jail for it.'

" 'But he looked and acted the part,' I faltered, thinking of Marion's letter.

" 'Experience rules that you can't judge the unrighteous by appearances,' he replied, impressively.

"My self-confidence began to wane, and I told the inspector the whole story of my transactions with Brown and of the dance.

" 'Guess I'll have to attend that function myself,' he observed, 'and get mention as among those present. But of course Brown won't be there. His sad tale was only a subterfuge to get the evidence out of your keeping, and you fell for it.'

"I looked the dismay I felt, so he went on a bit kindlier, 'Well, the real Hodge will be there, of course. Now give me a full description of Harry Brown.'

"Eagerly did I scan the columns of the papers next morning, for possible details of the arrest of Harry Brown, but I was disappointed. Then I turned to the society page and found an elaborate story of Mrs. Gardner's dance. John Hodge was there, but Inspector Shields didn't get shown up even 'among those present.'

"Nothing happened for three days, during which I continued to watch the papers, and then came the announcement of an engagement—John Hodge and Marion Day, the latter, sole heiress to a million and a half.

"The next morning's mail interested me keenly. It brought a check for one hundred and fifty dollars, and a note.

'Dear Sir:—When you have found the enclosed check, good for the amount drawn, you can send all my things to the Bay State Club. Allowing for everything, I think there will be a surplus of about $25, which you will please keep on account of kindness exercised on evening of March 30th, and one package of cigarettes.

Yours truly,
John Hodge.'

"A week later, Inspector Shields, looking foolish, made another call.

"'Hello!' I cried; 'how's dancing at the Copley-Plaza?'

"'Never got beyond the door,' he confessed. 'A young swell was on the lookout and steered me to a private room, where he told me the inside history of the affair. You were on the right tack: Hodge and Brown were the same person. Hodge, one of those golden spoon lads, found himself a pauper instead of heir to a fortune, and in his pride, broke with Miss Day. Tried to get work and make a place for himself but didn't succeed. Pawned his stuff under an assumed name—same old pride. Just as he was about all in, Miss Day discovered his whereabouts and sent him that letter. Then her brother met Hodge and asked him about the dance. Hodge, knowing he had no proper clothes, and rattled generally, said he couldn't be sure about coming. Asked for a reason—oh, his dress suit had been stolen! No sooner is this piece of information let loose than the brother sends in a report to the police; we get busy, and find you have the suit. Result—as you know.'"

"Seems to me Hodge's progress with the girl was extraordinary," I observed.

"Not at all. When a girl truly loves a man, she loves him a little more in misfortune than otherwise."

"And now he is Hodge the magnate, with a life history of journalistic worth."

"Exactly. People read that interview and believe they know all about him. They soak up the details of how his fortune was founded in a lucky coup in the stock market, followed by a quick venture in real estate, when it was entirely based—"

"On so unlikely a thing as a pawnbroker's investment of eighty-three cents in sentiment."

"There are few stories from which you can't omit a chapter and yet grasp the plot and arrive at safe conclusions," said my friend, the proprietor of the three golden balls.

Told in Minor

BY BERTON BRALEY

The world is full of human nature and human nature is the same all the world over—even on hard-eyed, cynical Broadway.

"I REPEAT," insisted Holden, doggedly, "the big city takes all the real human sympathy out of a man. I don't mean the man who is in the city and not of it, the man who goes to his work at seven or eight every morning and comes home at five to his simple meal and the bosom of his family, retiring at ten to his virtuous couch—but I say that the real city man who has more than a daytime acquaintance with Broadway and who has batted around enough to see the greed and hardness and humbug of everything, simply can't know or feel sorrow, or sympathy for anybody's woes—physical financial or mental.

"He's simply got to be case-hardened to misery and oblivious to want and suffering—that's his armor against constant mental irritation and distress. If he does help anyone in trouble it is because of the fatuous glow of self-satisfaction he gets out of the deed rather than any actual charity or love for his unfortunate fellow man."

"Such being the case," observed Martin, "I will order another drink."

It was one o'clock in the morning at McGann's billiard hall. There are two particularly intimate spaces in the day—between one and two A.M. and between five-thirty and seven P.M. The evening period is that lull succeeding work and preceding dinner, a time when men grow confidential across cafè tables and a small drink; the owl period comes after the theater and before one really wants to go home, and is usually somewhat more alcoholic, though scarcely less sincere.

This hour found McCann's rather more quiet than usual. A hard-faced gambler and a cruel-mouthed broker were idly playing pool at the nearest table. There were a few more players at further tables, and at the bar stood a vaudeville star, talking about himself, a heavy-jowled, theatrical magnate, and a pasty-faced, baggy-eyed person of the genus rounder. Behind the bar, the barkeeper was polishing glasses. He was the flabby type with fish-cold eyes, loose lips, and predatory nose. A police official of unsavory reputation, sat talking politics with a Tammany district leader at the second of the little round tables; Holden and Martin occupying the other.

Martin had been quietly noting the character of the group which made up this setting, while Holden talked, and while the second drink was in preparation. When it came and the waiter had retired to a state of som-

nolence at the end of the bar, he spoke.

"I'm not so sure of your conclusions," he said, "though your reasoning, on its face, seems excellent. Logically, a city man ought not to have any sympathy or emotion, but he frequently insists on acting illogically. Probably this bunch"—he gestured toward the various men near by—"is about as hopeless a gang to expect humanity out of as any you could imagine, and yet, I dare say, that one could easily rouse true sympathy and genuine emotion among them."

"I don't believe it," said Holden.

"Well, I'm too lazy to argue with you now," Martin replied. "Here's Happy Days!"

He raised his glass and drank.

"Happy days!" he repeated, musingly, fingering the glass, "well, life hasn't very many of them. I knew a few happy days in Paris—in the long ago, before—" He broke off suddenly, his eyes somber. "Well, they've gone—and I can't talk about them now without making more or less of a fool of myself."

His voice trembled. He seized the glass again and drank the rest of its contents at a gulp. Then he looked up and smiled, a trifle wanly.

"I'm a plain idiot," he said. "If I'm not careful, I'll be weeping on your shoulder—with only two small drinks for an excuse."

"I sense a story," said Holden, gently. "Why not tell me about it. Was it tragedy? Come on, old man, tell it; perhaps it will do you good—and I want to hear about it, anyhow."

Martin glanced about swiftly, leaned across the table and said, in a low, but vibrant voice, which reached nearly all the group about the bar and the little tables:

"It's a simple and rather commonplace little story of my two children in Paris—haven't I ever told it to you?"

"No," said Holden, "I didn't even know that you—"

"They were two of the finest babies any man could imagine," Martin went on. "Joe was five—a sturdy, bright, blue-eyed boy, and Sue was three. She was as dark as Joe was blonde. They were affectionate tads, too—one of 'em would sit on one knee and the other on the other, and they'd put their little arms about me and—"

Martin choked, and then shamefacedly bit his lip.

The Tammany politician and the police official sat with their drinks untasted, listening. The vaudeville actor had stopped his monologue and the bartender stood with a glass in his hand, mechanically polishing it for the tenth time. The game of pool was interrupted because the players were leaning on their cues, drinking in every syllable of Martin's voice, that marvelous, deep and vibrant voice which had thrilled so many audiences.

"Their mother, perhaps you know," Martin continued, "died when Sue was born. That was hard enough, but the children were left to comfort me and I had been father and mother to both of them, with the faithful little French maid to help me. She was a provincial, not a Parisienne, and her heart was too big for her

slender little body. She loved the children almost as much as I did—her whole thought and her whole life were devoted to them.

"But just when we were happiest together, Joe and Sue and the little maid and I, one day when I came home, only one little pair of feet pattered to the door to meet me, and only one little pair of arms hugged my neck.

" 'Where's baby Sue?' I asked Joe.

" 'She's upstairs,' he said. 'She's lyin' on the couch an' she said she didn't feel nice. Her head's all hot.'

"I ran up the stairs and found Marie bending over Sue, whose face was flushed with fever. Her eyelids fluttered open and she smiled, but with an effort.

" 'Lo Daddy,' she said, and then wearily turned her head against the pillow.

"I rushed out and got the nearest doctor, who happened to be an old practitioner with a very few clients. He came and fussed about, calming my fears by saying it was only a trifle of fever caused by the spring air or the mists—nothing serious, nothing serious at all, he insisted. He left some medicine and went his way.

"For two day, my little girl tossed and murmured; sometimes clinging to my hand, sometimes to that of Marie, but from her hot little lips there never came a word of fretfulness or complaint.

"On the night of the second day, little Joe, whom we had kept away from his sister, called to me and said: " 'Daddy, the roof of my room keeps coming down on me. Please hold it up—it's so heavy.'

"I felt of his head and found it was hot and feverish and his little lips were dry. Marie stayed and comforted Sue, while I lay on the bed all night beside my boy, with my hands above me, and pretended to hold up the ceiling, which he thought was pressing down upon him. It was very late before Marie could get out to call the doctor, who came, shook his head wisely, left some more pellets and went away, still talking about a touch of fever or a little cold.

"The next morning both children were worse and I did what I should have done before—sent for the best physician I could find. He came, gave one glance at the two flushed and feverish babies, opened their mouths, beckoned me aside and said, 'Diphtheria. They are very, very ill, Monsieur. You have had no doctor till now?" he asked, accusingly.

" 'I have had one ever since the first trace of sickness in the little girl,' I replied, 'but he said it was nothing serious and I thought he knew.'

" 'The fool!' shouted the doctor; 'the fool. Could he not see, could not any good doctor— or even any student —see the trouble! It need not have been serious at all, but now—well, I shall do what I can, Monsieur.'

Martin's hand shook as he tried to moisten his lips with a sip from his empty glass. There was not a sound except the clicking of billiard balls in a far corner, out of range of Martin's voice; the little group of habitués, already described, were frankly and openly gathered at the bar listening to Martin. As he paused, the bartender hastily blew his nose, while the broker was busy apparently trying

to extract something from his eye.

"For four days and four nights, Marie and I and the doctor fought to keep the little ones alive, fought to give them breath, but slowly the disease gained and the strength ebbed from their chubby bodies.

"And so, bravely, but with a look of hurt bewilderment in their eyes—for they could not understand the grim thing that held them in its clutch—my two babies lost their battle and at last, and almost at the same moment, they died—died cruelly, struggling, choking, gasping—as diphtheria victims do.

"'Ah, it is too sad, Monsieur,' Marie said, when it was all over; 'it is too sad. But how they were brave and sweet, Monsieur,' then she broke down and wept and I put my arms about her and held her while she cried. Somehow, I found a sort of comfort in her tears, though I could not weep, myself.

"Because of the quarantine, we could not go to the burial; and racked with pain and strain and lack of sleep, I went to bed. Exhausted nature had her way, and I slept for twenty-four hours and awoke a little refreshed, but with a terrible realization of what had befallen me. Marie was not about, and after ringing for her vainly, I went to her little room and knocked on the door. There was no answer and I opened the door, to find Marie delirious, and in the throes of the disease which had taken my children. When the doctor came, he told me that Marie had been infected because, one evening while I snatched an hour or so of sleep, she had saved John from strangling by sucking the deadly membrane from his throat with a tube.

"'But she would not let me tell you what she had done, Monsieur,' he explained.

"And there was never a chance to thank her or to make her know what such devotion meant to me, for Marie died soon, recognizing no one, but saying ever, 'How they were brave, how they were sweet—the little ones, Monsieur.'"

Martin took up his glass and lifted it to his mouth. Then realizing that it was empty, he set it down again. His eyes burned, his lips quivered. Holden reached for his friend's hand and clasped it; the bartender wiped his eyes, inconceivably softened, with the bar cloth. The lips of the cruel-mouthed broker trembled—the mouth was no longer cruel—and a big tear ran down his nose. The gambler pulled out a lavender-edged handkerchief, mopped his flushed face, blew his nose, fidgeted a moment, and then walked over to where Martin sat. He patted him tenderly on the back. "Sorry, old pal," he said; "that was damn hard. I've lost two myself and I know how it is. You don't mind my speakin' this way to you even if I am a stranger, do you?" Martin shook his head.

At the police official's table, he and the politician relieved the tension by loudly ordering another drink—and then, realizing that their attempt to cover their emotion thus was ill-timed and unsuccessful—they rose together and walked out softly, pausing an instant to administer a furtive pat on Martin's bowed shoulders.

The theatrical manager and the

vaudevillist, suddenly awoke to the fact that their last drinks stood untouched on the bar. With one impulse, they gulped them down, choked, swore, looked at their watches and went out. The old rounder had not stirred since the ending of the story. Now he moved over to the table where Holden and Martin were sitting.

"Brother," he said, "I'm sorry for you—and yet I envy you. You've had babies to love you—you've had babies to love and to lose. I've never even had a dog to love me. Good night." And he, too, went out.

"I take it all back," said Holden, as they rose to go. "I was wrong. That hardened gang of libertines were as truly and humanly affected by your story as—as I was. But why didn't you ever tell me of Paris and of your wife and children before, in these years I've known you?"

"Because," said Martin, "I never needed to prove a point like that to you before. As a matter of fact, I was never in Paris—and I never had a wife or children."

The Roundabout Road

BY EMMET F. HART

"All around the mulberry bush" went $418 *found by a subject of chance and back again it went to its original owner plus a liberal interest.*

OF course, if you've anything more important on hand, why—but if not, we'll say the chronicle began in St. Louis.

Meteorologically speaking, it was not a nice evening. A low-hanging canopy of fog overhung the city's streets; a moist, clinging, yellow mist, pungent with coal smoke and the varied odors and foulness of a metropolis in solution—a night of damp, indeterminate, muffled murmurings.

The clack of unseen horses' feet, the hollow drumming of wheels, fragments of talk, the clang of steet-car gongs and the occasional grunt of an automobile horn. A night for footpads, rheumatism, collisions, collusions — a marshalling of wavering shadows in gloomy nooks, wherein well might lurk the re-embodied spirits of Mystery, of Romance, of Adventure. Aha, say you; the tale takes a familiar shape! It is doubtless an old friend, albeit seedy from travelling a beaten path. Wait.

As R. Elliot McMacken, sometimes called Sport, rounded a corner some blocks removed from the downtown district, he slipped and fell sprawling. This statement, pertinent to both plot and setting, serves partly to introduce the action. We are shy only style and theme. There are stories —but, well, all right.

Fate is a jester. He, she, or it, as the case may be, moves in prankish ways, odd whimsies to perform. With his mouth mechanically set to the pronouncement of an anathema, Sport McMacken felt, beneath his fingers, the presence of some yielding object. The expletive he had been about to utter went unrecorded against him; he whistled softly instead, for he recognized by the shape and feel of it that a plump pocketbook lay there within the grasp of his fortunate hand. Rising, he peered quickly to right and left. No one was in sight. He crossed the street, pausing momentarily under the pallid illumination of a sputtering arc to inspect his find. A glance served—he caught a glimpse of banknotes, a considerable number of them, before slipping the pocketbook inside his shabby coat and plunging hastily into the deeper shadows.

Ten blocks onward, any fanciful hue and cry that he conceived to have resounded in his wake, growing fainter in the distance, the fugitive paused. A sign—"L. Levinsky, Clothing, Hats, Shoes"—looming semicircularly on an unwashed window, claimed the renegade's attention. A glimmer of light within, indicated that the establishment was yet open to the importuni-

ties of chance customers. Sport fingered the latch furtively, and then entered. It was I. Levinsky himself who came forward to attend him.

"Shoes," said Sport McMacken briefly.

Isadore Levinsky was not merely a salesman; he was also a hypnotist. The unsuspecting purchaser, having tendered a twenty-case-note from an obviously well-filled purse in payment for the shoes, at once became prospective manna from the mist. Hence it was a metamorphosed Sport that issued forth from I. Levinsky's something like an hour subsequently. In natty surge suit, near-panama, oxblood oxfords—to say naught of mercerized underwear, silkoid hose, silkaline shirt, silkette four-in-hand, glass pearl stick pin, oroide cuff-links—in fact, to all appearances, a citizen of distinction. Seventy-six dollars had the outfitting cost him—seventy-six dollars in cash. In the quasi-gloom of his little railed-off office, Isadore Levinsky massaged his hands. Seventy-six dollars' sale, and he had been about to lock up for the night when it happened. Think of it!

While in the temporary privacy of Levinsky's dressing room, McMacken had taken a hasty inventory of his capital. The pocketbook had contained originally four hundred and ten dollars in currency—and but little else; there were three stamps of the two-cent denomination, and a scrap of paper on which was written a few figures; and stencilled on the inner lining in gold letters was a name—probably that of the owner—Melrose Jordan. In view of the present possessor's manifest disregard for any prior rights in the premises, this name however, seemed of negligible importance.

Outside, the fog was being precipitated in a fine mist that threatened to become a steady drizzle. Our adventurer stood under an awning, for the moment undecided. A cab drawn by lagging steeds swerved in toward the curb, slowed down and stopped. "Kerridge? Anywhere ye wanta go?" came ingratiatingly from the blurred figure on the box.

Upon small pivots do large hinges revolve. R. Elliot McMacken hadn't thought of it before, but the idea suggested was not without its merits. A carriage suggested a railway station; at the railway station were trains bound—east, north, west, south. To a man with money, the field was wide, wide. Sport entered the vehicle.

"Union Depot, Jack," he directed succinctly.

A droning litany, that fell upon his ears as he passed through the general waiting-room, determined his further movements. "N-n-ng 'ra-in-n go-in-ng nor-th! Nang-um-m-m! Br-r-r-ng! N-ng-cago! N-points b-yond-d! On-n tra-ack ten-n!" was its import. He stood in line, and in his turn passed a bill through the barred window, duly receiving therefor, a ticket to Chicago.

Seated later in the smoking compartment of the train which bore him forward through the velvety darkness, lulled by the rhythmic *chanson* of whirring wheels on rail joints beneath him, our traveller observed disinterestedly, a trio of men who sat, one on the seat beside him, and the other two on the divan opposite.

All were of the genial, clean-shaven, sophisticated, American travelling-salesmen type. The conversation became general, presently including Sport in its mazes, and soon he found himself acquainted and accepted at his face value. Identities were established. The man next to him was named Ewing, and acknowledged himself as associated with one of the three notable products for which Kentucky has achieved a considerable noteworthiness—the other two being fine horses and and beautiful women. Incidentally, Ewing carried a flask of his ware, which same was duly introduced in evidence at an early stage of the proceedings.

Next to Ewing sat Thomas J. Atcliff, asphalt salesman, Chicago, and the third was George W. Crosby, St. Louis, hardware.

McMacken, in his turn, vouchsafed certain vague information as concerned himself—hinting at mining interests in the west, but with becoming modesty. Some one among the others—it may have been Crosby—later proposed an hour's diversion at the ancient and reputable gentleman's pastime of draw poker—a suggestion which was received with loud acclaim by all of those present. The wight of the whisk broom having been properly importuned, provided a lap-board, and Ewing, as it happened, furnished the cards and other accessories needed, from his travelling bag.

Atcliff dealt. The cards ran shy to the point of reticence. All contributed the usual counter, and Crosby shuffled the cards for another round. It was then Sport's privilege to speak up; he shook his head. Ewing, however, made shift to breach the citadel with a blue disc. Atcliff and Sport each invested half a dollar, and drew one and two cards respectively. Ewing shaved his hand to the bone.

"Up to you," he remarked briefly.

Atcliff tapped the table. Sport advanced a red chip. Ewing "saw" the bet, and raised a blue. Atcliff sighed, and—came in with a red and two blues. Sport murmured: "Beats me," and tossed his cards on the pack.

"Money accrues from divers sources," quoth Ewing, augmenting the mound by two more blues. Atcliff sighed, and boosted the bet yet again.

"Sight me," said Ewing. The other displayed the seven, nine, ten, queen and ace of hearts. Ewing threw down three kings with an air of sublime disgust.

Sport dealt.

"I'll rift this one for a red bean," Ewing announced. Atcliff stayed, Crosby also. Sport kept out. After the draw, the bet went round thrice. Crosby called, showing two small pairs. Ewing exhibited three nines. Atcliff absorbed the stakes with a trey full.

"Bull luck," commented Ewing. "Let Pa deal 'em once."

Sport started the hostilities this time. Ewing boosted the bet before the draw. Atcliff likewise saw fit to venture a raise. Even Crosby made it a blue chip better.

"Here's where we clean up," chuckled Ewing. "Why not remove the restrictions? I feel like an aero-

plane myself."

"Right," said Atcliff. Crosby nodded. Sport delved with thumb and finger in his inner pocket, and dropped a bill on the central mound.

"My dear sir!" said Ewing. "Have you no sense of humor? I was only fooling. A ten-case note? My stars —a twenty! Pardon me, I'm out."

Crosby choked on the smoke of his cigar and blinked at the plunger meditatively. "Well, I wear woolen hose," he remarked finally, adding two fives and a ten to the pot. Atcliff was numbered among the fallen.

"Two cards," said Crosby.

"One," said Sport. "Start the bet with a tenner."

"Ten better," returned the other unemotionally.

"Make it ten better."

"Raise you twenty."

Sport again delved in his pocket. "Fifty better," he said pleasantly.

"Um," mused Crosby. "Fifty'll about leave me carfare. Well, here goes!"

"Tough luck," grinned his opponent, displaying four kings. Crosby sadly threw down three aces with a pair of tens.

Fresh cigars were lighted. Ewing brought out a fat purse and hitched himself forward in his place. Crosby discovered a further supply of money somewhere on his person, and kept on. Atcliff seemed well supplied with funds. The game progressed.

It was, mayhap, an hour later, that Atcliff opened a pot with a dollar bet. Ewing, who had been consistently losing, at last claimed poverty's prerogative, and isolated a certain portion of the stakes. Crosby stood one raise before the draw and dropped out.

Atcliff and Sport continued to boost each other mercilessly. On the draw, the former drew two cards, the latter one. Ewing, having failed to help a luckless pair of eights, yelped an execration and became a spectator.

"Bet a hundred," grunted Atcliff.

"Raise you a hundred," said Sport without looking at his cards.

Atcliff deliberated. "Hundred more," he said.

Sport smiled genially. "Two hundred better," he announced pleasantly.

Atcliff disinterred the last remaining bill from his wallet—a fifty. "I seem to be touching bottom," he commented; "fifty's my pile."

Ewing craned his neck to get a glimpse of Sport's hand. A thing, Mr. Ewing, not generally regarded as good form in polite society.

"Come in for what you have," said Sport cheerfully. "Small sums thankfully received, and large ones in proportion."

"Thanks awfully," decided Atcliff. "My feet seem to be tolerably wet as it is. I think I'll save this half century for the taxi man. Good night!"

Sport jumbled his cards in the scrap heap, and raked in the clutter of money. The game was over. The assembled company presently dispersed to their several sections, all except Crosby, who was getting off at Peoria.

"What did that fellow hold?" Atcliff queried of Ewing, as they passed along the aisle together. "I'm a little curious to know. I quit with four queens."

"My poor dear sir," said Ewing. "Alackaday! He had a diamond flush—but for one thing. The last diamond he drew was a spade."

At ten o'clock the following morning, R. Elliot McMacken, newly shaved, bathed, and breakfasted, with nine hundred dollars in his pocket, sauntered along Michigan Avenue. The lake breeze caressed his temples, and whispered alluring messages from the cool woods beyond the blue horizon, but his ears were not attuned to the idle importunities of chance wandering zephyrs.

He bought a paper, and momentarily pausing at a corner to glance at its headlines, lingered to read the market quotations. Then, apparently moved by some definite purpose, he propounded a question to the traffic officer; and having received a prompt and courteous reply, nodded, smiled, offered his informant a gilt-banded cigar, and tripped airily on his way.

A little later, our pensive adventurer sat nonchalantly in a leather chair in an office on the fourth floor back, of a building where the soft invitation of the lake breeze was somewhat lost in the shuffle. A short-necked man in shirt sleeves, whose chief air in life seemed to be the grim mastication of an unlighted cigar, sat at a cluttered desk. A demure young woman at a diminutive table by the far wall was achieving a species of near rhythm in the tick-tack-tack of typewriter keys. The man at the desk blocked a telephone mouthpiece with a pudgy hand.

"July pork eighteen sixty-two and a half," he remarked over his shoulder to Sport.

"Buy five hundred," returned that person yawning.

The man repeated this behest in as many words to somebody on the line.

"How's wheat?" asked Sport.

"Ninety, five-eighths."

"Buy five thousand."

An hour, let us say, elapsed, during which interval McMacken, lounging by a window, silently beguiled himself by staking imaginary odds on the outcome of a sparrow battle in progress on a nearby roof. At eleven o'clock he turned expectantly to the man at the desk.

"Pork, nineteen eighty-five; wheat, ninety-two, seven eights," said that person.

"Sell," directed Sport curtly.

At noon—having edged in opportunely on the eve of a five point jump in U. S. Electric—Sport unloaded, settled up, shook hands, and caught a car. His cash capital now amounted to some twenty-four hundred dollars. While lunching at a modest restaurant he made the acquaintance of a congenial stranger who gave the name of Smith as his cognominal embellishment. This person mentioned something about automobile races at Indianapolis. By catching the 12.50 interurban car, the two were able to reach the Indiana capital the same evening.

Smith was a racing enthusiast. To this fact might be attributed the passing circumstance that, on the following day, at two-thirty post meridian, to be exact, Sport idly ventured a paltry hundred dollars to win on Linda Lee, quoted at 40 to 1 to lose. (They were in a quiet room on the seventh floor of a downtown office

building at that time.) Linda Lee won by a nose. Compute the result yourself.

At three o'clock Sport bade Smith adieu and boarded the Hoosier Limited for Louisville. On the way he met a man wearing a polka-dotted waistcoat, who confided, after some hours' acquaintance, that he was a big league scout professionally engaged in reconnoitering the minors for future pennant-winners. Jones was the name.

Arrived at the City of Colonels at a not unseemly hour, the two supped, juleped, and Jones confided further, that he knew a place where one might pass a pleasant hour dabbling ones feet in the fountain of chance without getting needlessly bedraggled. Sport said that he didn't mind.

Somewhere near midnight, a man behind a table in a luxuriously appointed apartment, several floors up and a few blocks around the corner, noted the ultimate resting-place of a small sphere which had traversed the inner surface of a sort of concave bowl just previously, and tendered Sport some three thousand dollars in bills, as a generous reward for his cleverness in prognostication.

Louisville seemed, if anything, dull, the next morning. It is a flat, rather uninteresting town, and smells of tobacco. However, the flyer (?) for Memphis leaves, as a rule, at 10.10 in the forenoon. Sport unostentatiously stepped aboard at 10.09.

At the Brunhilde, overlooking the rejuvenated river-front in Memphis, a short-sighted desk-clerk grinned somewhat significantly at our traveller's near-panama. The grinne at once sought the proprietor of the hostelry.

"Set a price on this dump," he snapped, in the tone of one who has five minutes to spare, no more.

"Furniture, lease, good-will—nine thousand bucks," said Boniface, after four minutes' self-communion.

"You've sold it," said Sport. "Fix up the papers."

As the new proprietor, he accepted the thoughtless clerk's apology, stopped over for dinner, and later sold out for ten thousand dollars cash, to a man named Skinner, with a margin of nearly ten minutes to spare in order to catch the outgoing train for Kansas City. The journey being somewhat of longer duration, he had an opportunity to secure a little revivifying sleep.

In Kansas City he paused to purchase a cigar before climbing the hill, tendering a one-dollar note, and receiving nine dollars and seventy-five cents in change. Uptown he bought a nickeloid watch from a corner spellbinder, and presently was knocked down by a speeding motorist—who paid him $500 for a bruised forearm, and a little dusting; yet later on, he had his pocket picked of his watch in the crowd, attending a bargain sale of granite-ware dishpans at a 5-and-10-cent store. Willing spectators, however, promptly captured the pickpocket, and restored to him an elegant gold watch, together with a roll of currency amounting to $250. He refused to prosecute the offender, and at nine P.M. caught the Comet for Omaha.

In Omaha one hears of the Big Storm, and sees—but this isn't really

a sightseeing story. Having breakfasted and communed with the barber, our wayfarer dilly-dallied on a bench in a little park, amusing himself betimes, by feeding popcorn to the Chinese chickens—and by taking off a trial balance of his assets and liabilities with a stub of pencil on the margin of a Times-Graphic. These calculations showed that he possessed in negotiable collateral the sum of $11,011.06, the six cents of which was in stamps.

And then—a full page advertisement in the paper claimed his attention.

UNEXAMPLED INVESTMENT!

For ten days only the unparalleled opportunity is afforded the public to purchase at par, three thousand shares, at $50 each, in

THE CENTRAL BRAZIL RUBBER PLANTATION SYNDICATE, LIMITED

Home Office, Jefferson Block, St. Louis, U.S.A.

Cable Address, Cebrarucco

The announcement was followed by more extended and attractively explicit paragraphs explaining the rare chance of fortune presented to the conservative investor, the unheard-of, almost unbelievable profits already being garnered by the company, together with a detailed statement of the capitalization, strength, backing, etc., of the undertaking, its plans, its splendid promises, its absolute integrity.

"Safe, Certain, Sixteen Per-Cent. on the Investment!" was the final compelling paragraph. Sport read the whole page over twice, and the euphony of that final sentence stirred his pulses strangely. "Safe, Certain, and Sixteen Per-Cent!" It sounded more and more alluring. He feared that it was already too late—that his opportunity had only knocked at the eleventh hour. He got into immediate action, hieing him in person to the nearest telegraph office, hastily.

"Want two hundred shares," he wired. "Advise if available."

The reply came with reasonable celerity. "Original block sold out. Have option 200 shares till tomorrow at 55. If O.K. wire purchase price, Windward National Bank, our order quick."

Galvanized into immediate action, our embryo chevalier d'investment hurriedly took advantage of this last chance to get in on the ground floor. After which he took time to congratulate himself. Beyond all possibility of a reasonable doubt, the stock would touch 65, or even higher, within a week. He felt it by some clairvoyant instinct.

Meanwhile, Omaha seemed a humdrum and uninteresting place, withal. He thought it not unadvisable to make a little flying dash down to the home office. So he bought a ticket and had a lower reserved.

Saturday, in the afternoon, then, R. Elliott McMacken, flecked with the dust of several leagues of traveling, descended from the train under the station sheds at St. Louis, having in his pocket a single silver dollar yet unnegotiated. And having descended, he entered a waiting hack or cabriolet, mentioning to the patient driver certain directions concerning the Jefferson Block.

A short drive brought him thither. The fare was an even dollar.

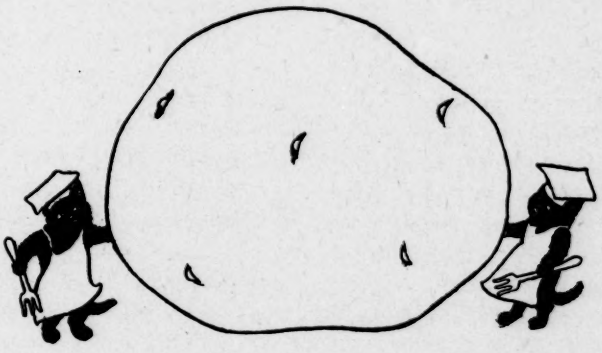
Sport stood in somewhat dubious contemplation of a squat, squalid,

smoke-discolored edifice, whose three stories were tenanted by a cosmopolitan array of enterprises, ranging from second-hand goods to rooms for light housekeeping. There being no elevator, he climbed two flights of rickety stairs before finding that which he sought.

A frosted glass door bore the insignia: "Central Brazil Rubber Company—Office." The visitor rapped, listened, turned the knob. The door was not locked. He opened it and gazed into the room.

There was a desk, table, chairs—all empty. Discarded pamphlets, literature of an advertising nature, lay strewed upon the floor. He stepped to the abandoned desk, and with an air of stolid, half-bored curiosity, picked up and examined a printed business card which lay thereon. "The Central Brazil Rubber Plantation Syndicate Limited," he read, and, in the lower left hand corner, in smaller type, the words:

"Melrose Jordan, president."



The Leper

BY EDWARD J. WOLFSOHN

In a dangerous experiment with physicology a doctor is the indirect cause of his friend's death.

ROGER LAWSON was not feeling fit. His trip down to Central America had been a success as far as business was concerned, and now he was returning with the assurance of a junior partnership and an income that meant that he and Marion Wyland would be able to afford the little bungalow on the South Shore, which had been their hearts' desire for three years. But Lawson was not happy. He could not seem to shake off a feeling of dreadful depression which had settled over him like a pall. He could trace that feeling back to the day of his talk with the dignified gray-haired scientist whom he had met on the vacation he gave himself to see the Panama Canal.

They sat together on the observation train and had naturally fallen to talking. From discussing this wonder of modern engineering they had come to speak of the beauties of the tropical land through which they were travelling. Here the professor was at home and he told his companion much about the marvelous resources of this country. Of course Lawson had wished to know the reason why they had not been developed, and the professor had explained it was due to the unhealthfulness of the climate for the white race. Then their talk had switched to the subject of sickness and disease, and they chanced to mention leprosy. Lawson's knowledge of this subject was very limited, but the professor, whose store of general information seemed inexhaustible, had been able to give him many details. Lawson's quick imagination had been fired; he had seen a play in New York the previous winter dealing on this subject, and it had left a vivid impression on him.

"Is it absolutely incurable?" he had asked.

"As incurable as any disease can be," said the professor. "Men have had it for years and not known it, and eventually died from something else. But in its common form, it is only a question of a few years. I saw a leper in India who had been living away by himself after he found he had the disease, so the authorities could not get him, but had at last been found out. They were taking him away in an open cart. It was horrible."

"Do they ever get loose among the people?" asked Lawson.

"Only in such a case as this," answered the professor. "When a man realizes that he has the disease and that it means a living death for him in a leper colony after the authorities find it out, then sometimes he goes far

away where no one will know him. Of course it is practically impossible for a man in that condition to get into any civilized community where there is medical inspection. But they will go to those places where they can get in among the people unnoticed, and so live a little longer in human society. For instance, a place like this would be quite ideal."

"Is it possible for you or me to contract the disease from any one near us?" inquired Lawson.

"I am not quite sure about that. It is only when it has advanced so far that parts of the body, such as the skin and nails, begin to come off, that it is possible for somebody else to get it. And I believe that contagion from this source has been know to happen long after the leper himself has been removed from the spot. But you are not enjoying this. There, see that large red flower on the bank; it catches insects and eats them alive." And so the talk had drifted off into other channels.

But that conversation had taken a powerful hold on Lawson's imagination; more so than he himself realized. The unaccustomed climate and food were probably the direct causes of his not being able to shake off the morbid trend of his thoughts. He had lost his appetite, and was very glad when, after three weeks on the Isthmus, his firm had wired him to take the next boat back; they needed him at the office.

The trip back was not enlivening his spirits or giving him a more cheerful outlook on life. He had no desire for his food and he slept very badly. The morning when he arrived in New York, after he had interviewed the partners, who had congratulated him and offered him the position as junior member of the firm, he called up his old boyhood friend and college chum, Doctor Philip Bradley, and made an appointment for that afternoon.

In the last six years the friends had seen very little of each other, though they both felt that the friendship still endured. So it was for that reason that Lawson had called up Dr. Bradley, knowing that he would give him both friendly and professional aid, though each would be independent of the other.

Lawson was at the office a few minutes before the appointed time, and was compelled to wait as Dr. Bradley was engaged. Knowing he was welcome, he wandered into his friend's private study, and picking up a book haphazard off the table, he settled himself in the big arm-chair to read and wait. He did not find the book particularly interesting. It dealt with experiments in physicology relative to the results of suggestion in the treatment and cure of nervous diseases. It was much underlined in places and had evidently been thoroughly perused by Doctor Bradley. Soon he let it drop in his lap and became deeply immersed in his own thoughts. In a few minutes the doctor came in. After they had exchanged cordial greetings, Lawson jumped straight to the object of his visit.

"Phil, I am not feeling right and I want you to tell me what's the matter with me," he said.

"All right, old man, tell me what's troubling you," replied Bradley.

"Well, I haven't been sleeping good,

and then, I have no appetite, and I feel generally down in the mouth."

"H-mn, how long have you been feeling this way?"

"About three weeks."

"Seems to me I remember your sending me a card from Panama. When did you get back?"

"This morning."

"Let's see your tongue. Hmm; pretty thick. Well, there is nothing I can tell you now. It is quite possible you have caught one of the local fevers down there, but I don't think there is anything to worry about. Tell you what I'll do—take a specimen of your blood and examine it tomorrow morning, and you drop in to-morrow afternoon. Then perhaps I can give you something more definite. Roll up your sleeve."

He got out his slides and needle and in a few moments the simple operation was over. "Now I can give you about five minutes more, old scout, and then you must excuse me. I am putting in all my spare time on some experimental work in physicology, like that stuff you have been reading there. But tell me, how was your trip; of course you saw the Canal?"

"Oh, I enjoyed the big ditch quite well; it's a great piece of work. I was only sorry that Marion was not there with me; she would have liked it so much. By the way, I met an awfully interesting old chap on the observation train—a professor from the Smithsonian Institute. You and he would have got along fine together. That man has been all over the world. Why, he was even telling me about a leper he saw in India. Do you know, Phil, I have been wondering since if they ever get over to this hemisphere. This professor told me it was quite possible to run into one down there in the Canal Zone, where they come for a last fling at life. Have you heard anything like that?"

"Well, we do get cases every now and then over here, and it is quite possible there may have been a few down there. Look out man, you'll ruin that book!"

For Lawson had suddenly stood up, and the book, which had been lying forgotten on his knee, fell to the floor. He picked it up and put it on the table. The doctor reached for it.

"Well," he said, "I guess it's not hurt. What have you been reading this stuff for? Isn't it considerably out of your line? Did you get anything out—"

He suddenly stopped and shot a quick glance at his friend. But the other had been paying very little attention, for he was gazing into vacancy with a troubled look on his countenance. The doctor got up briskly.

"Sorry to put you out, old chap, but I have a lot of work to do yet. You run along home and go to bed. I wouldn't advise that you see much of anybody for the next few days till we know just what's the matter with you. Walk down here to-morrow about this time."

While he was talking he had slipped on a pair of rubber gloves. He walked to the door with his friend. "Don't forget, this time to-morrow. Good-bye." And he held out his hand. Lawson took it mechanically, and then noticed the glove.

"What in the dickens have you got

those on for?" he asked.

Dr. Bradley looked embarrassed for a moment.

"Why, you see—well, I have to handle a contagion case next, and you know we doctors can't be too careful. Good bye." And he shut the door.

When Lawson got to his rooms, he 'phoned his office, saying he would not be down for a few days as his doctor had ordered him to stay in. Then he called up Marion. He had written her that he would be at her home this evening. She answered the 'phone herself and immediately recognized his voice.

"Oh, Roger, I am so glad you are back. When did you get in? Did you have a good trip? I am so glad you thought to call me up right away. Of course you are coming up for supper?" And she stopped for want of breath.

"Just a minute, dear. Now one at a time. I am awfully sorry, but it is going to be quite impossible for me to get up to-night, or to-morrow night, either, I am afraid. Now wait a moment; don't break in. What's that, don't I want to come! Now listen dear, you know I would if I possibly could, but just now there are some things that I can't put aside."

"What's the reason that you can't come?" she wanted to know.

"I can't tell you right now, dearest, but you know it must be a good one."

"Aren't you well? Your voice doesn't sound at all natural. What is it, Roger?" she begged.

"Why, how foolish you are; I am feeling as fine as silk. But I'll tell you to-morrow if I can."

"Well, if you can't tell me, I don't know whether I will be in to-morrow or not." He could almost feel the ice in her voice. "Here you have been away five weeks now and your last letters have been so cold and unlike you. Don't you love me any more?"

"Darling, how can you ask me anything like that. I am going to have a wonderful piece of news to tell you when I see you again, about the office. What? No, I won't tell you now."

"Well, if you don't want to tell me anything now, good-bye." And a little click showed she had hung up.

Lawson stood for a moment staring dumbly into the mouthpiece. Then "Number please," said Central, and he hung up the receiver and went slowly to his room. He undressed and went to bed, but not to sleep. He tossed about for hours, his brain racing like mad. Towards morning he dozed a little, but his slumbers were broken by hideous nightmares. His body was wet with a damp perspiration. Morning finally came and he got up, shaved, bathed and dressed himself scrupulously immaculate. Then he surveyed himself in the glass. What he saw was a five-foot-ten specimen of straight American manhood, a face distinctively good looking, with regular features, dark grey eyes, brown hair and a complexion darkened by out-door exposure. But that peculiar glow of life and health was lacking and so the usual pleasant attractiveness of countenance was lost. With a sigh, Lawson turned away. He went out into the busy life and bustling throngs of a New York morning. Everywhere he thought people turned and looked at him with suspicion.

"I'll not have another night like last

night," he said to himself. He went into a drug store and asked for some laudanum in capsules.

"Can't sell it without a physician's prescription," said the drug clerk.

"I don't want much," said Lawson, "just enough to get a good night's sleep. I've been doing some heavy work." Here he slipped a bill across the counter.

"Well, I guess I can let you have a little," said the clerk. "You look as if you needed a sleep."

Lawson pocketed his purchase and went out. Then a sudden thought struck him. He went to several stores and in each he got the same amount of the drug in the same way. He put all the capsules into one bottle and threw the rest away.

He wandered aimlessly about until it was time to go to the doctor's office. Again he was ahead of time and went into the private study. He settled himself in the big chair to wait. The title of a book on the table caught his eye. It was "What We Know About Leprosy." He picked it up and started to read. Soon he was deeply engrossed. He did not notice that the door opened a crack and then softly closed. It was a half hour before Dr. Bradley came in.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, old man," he said. "But I had a rather bad case just now." Lawson noticed that he had on rubber gloves and he had not offered to shake hands.

"How are you today," continued Dr. Bradley. "Feeling any better?" Without waiting for an answer he went on, "Funny thing about that blood of yours. There were some peculiar things I couldn't make out in it. They looked like white blood corpuscles that had undergone a change. So I sent it down to the Experimental Laboratories and they promised to give me a report on it this afternoon. If they don't 'phone me in half an hour, I'll call them up. Meanwhile you don't mind waiting here, do you? Just make yourself comfortable. You must excuse me; this is my busy time." And he went out again.

Lawson resumed his reading. He had come to that part of the book which treated of the symptoms of leprosy. "The disease first attacks the extremities; the fingers when pinched remain white and have no feeling." He pinched his finger and to his distorted vision, the spot became dead white. He scratched the back of his hand with his finger nail, and the sunburned skin showed a white line. He read farther and each symptom seemed to fit into his own case. Then he became aware of the telephone in the next room. Dr. Bradley was talking.

"Hello, Experimental Laboratories? Yes, this is Dr. Bradley. Have you that report for me. All right. Hello. Yes, this is Dr. Bradley himself. Yes, I know him personally. Why, he is here now. He has been down in Panama. In Asia did you say? Oh, yes, I get you. No, not at all. About three weeks ago." A long silence. "I will attend to it. All right, good bye."

Lawson held his breath for a moment. Was his friend coming in! No, evidently he had gone back to his laboratory. Well, there was no doubt about it now. The book said that one in ten thousand caught the disease as

he had. It was a pity that he should be that one, but there was no help for it now. He paced up and down the room for a few moments, and then paused by the table. Absent-mindedly he picked up another book on which his hand was resting, and carelessly turned the leaves. A picture caught his eye. It showed leprosy in its last stages. He looked at the title of the book. It was called "Incurable Diseases."

With a shudder he turned away, "Never that," he muttered. He drew the tube of capsules which he had purchased during the morning, from his pocket, and quickly swallowed them all. Then he sat down at the desk, and drawing a sheet of paper to him, began to write. He wrote steadily for ten minutes. Then he folded up the note, put it in an envelope, addressed it and sealed it. This finished, he stood up and stretched himself, like a man who is tired. For the moment, he looked quite peaceful and happy.

The door opened and Dr. Bradley came into the room. He saw his friend standing by the table, with his fist tightly clenched. His face was ghastly white. On the table lay the book of incurable diseases, and at a glance the doctor saw that it was open at the subject of leprosy. The edge of the leaf was still dog-eared as he had left it on purpose. He quickly crossed to his friend's side and grasped him by the elbow.

"Why, old man, what's the matter? Are you ill?" and as Lawson tried to draw away, he asked, "Tell me, is there anything wrong?"

Lawson slowly withdrew himself from his friend's hold. "Don't touch me, Phil, it isn't safe. I have," here his voice faltered and broke, "I have," again he stopped, unable to control himself. Then he turned and pointed to the open book with its horrible illustration, "Leprosy." Then as Bradley made a move toward him, he cried out, "For God's sake, man, keep away; do you want to get it? Keep away, I tell you. It will soon be over now."

After a moment he raised his head, which had fallen on his breast, and never did Dr. Bradley see such an expression of woe and suffering on any human countenance before. So strong was it that it pierced the man's thick outer shell of self-centered egoism, and touched the human heart of him, so that he forgot that this was an important experiment in physicology and remembered that this man was his friend and not a case.

"It's all right, old chap, don't worry," he said, and then he stopped, for Lawson was not listening to him. His eyes had a far-away look, and he was muttering to himself.

"Poor Marian, she didn't know what had come over me; she thought I didn't love her any more and I could tell it nearly broke her heart. But I couldn't tell her what I thought until I knew whether my suspicions were right or not. God knows I love her more than life itself. She will know that now. It's there, Phil, in that note; see that she gets it, but don't let her come near me, afterwards. I wish I could stay to comfort her. It will be hard for her, Heaven knows how hard. But in time she will forget. Poor little girl! Poor little girl!" He stopped and Dr. Bradley saw that he swayed on his feet.

"Look here, man," he said, going over to Lawson and violently shaking him. "Come to yourself. It's all right, I tell you." But the other looked at him with uncomprehending eyes. "It was only an experiment I was trying, man. Forgive me for the pain and trouble I have caused you, but it was in the interest of science. I only suggested this to you to see what effect it would have on those symptoms of yours, which are nothing more than malaria. Now that you have spoiled my experiment," here he gave a broken laugh, "go on back to your Marian. She will love you just the same as ever. Forgive me, old chap," and here he held out his hand.

But Lawson did not see the hand; he was staring at the doctor with wide-open, horror-stricken eyes, and his breath was coming in hoarse gasps.

"I—haven't—got—leprosy," he jerked out. "You—were—only—experimenting—on—me—is—that—it?"

Dr. Bradley nodded his head. "That's right," he said. "I am mightily ashamed of myself, Roger. I never thought you would take it this way. Forgive me, won't you!" and again he held out his hand.

"It was—only—an—experiment. My—God!" Little drops of perspiration stood out on Lawson's brow. He opened his fist and a little empty bottle rolled out on the table and dropped at Dr. Bradley's feet. He picked it up and saw on the label "Laudanum." For a second his usually active brain refused to give him the connection. Then in a blinding flash it came over him. With a sharp cry, he sprang toward his friend.

"You haven't," and then he stopped. Lawson was standing with one hand clenched over his heart, and the other held up in a gesture as if he were fending off some approaching horror. And in his eyes Dr. Bradley saw such an expression of unutterable loathing, and scorn, and disgust, that he reeled back as if from a blow. Thus for a moment they held that tableau, but in all the time from then till eternity will it be impressed just as strongly on the vision of Dr. Bradley.

"You leper," said Lawson, and crumpled up on the floor.

The Grasping Hand

(Confessions of a Nurse)

BY GRACE STUART REID

If you possess a mean, niggardly spirit read this amazing confession and profit by it.

I HAD passed through the happiest time of my life—my training as a nurse in the New York Hospital. I had had my first call, a case of incipient typhoid fever at the Hotel Brunswick. The patient was a young girl.

"Are you of the Van Thorps of Albany?" asked her mother, as she eyed me critically, after hearing my name.

I had the honor of telling her I was of that family, but in reduced circumstances. She was gratified. She said she would not have liked a common person waiting on her daughter. But all the time I was with her, she did not once forget the three dollars a day she paid me for nursing, nor the five dollars a day she paid the hotel for my board. She looked upon me as a maid-of-all-work.

I had been engaged as a day nurse, but my nights were never my own. I was supposed to have imbibed sufficient outdoor air before coming to last my stay. I was expected to lift my charge bodily in and out of bed, a sizable, modern-built girl of stronger physique than my own. When I left, she thanked me for my care by a pat on the cheek. Her mother hoped I would continue to have nice comfortable places and prompt pay as I had had with her.

I went out of the hotel feeling as if the unfashionable cut of my brown ulster shut me off from any say in the world. I was homesick for the other folks like me at my beloved hospital, for the order, the *esprit-de-corps*, the tangible results there which had made my profession seem so high.

Footsore and heavy-hearted, I made my way to the room in Fifteenth Street where I kept my trunk and which was to serve me as a breathing place between engagements. I had no sooner reached it than I received a peremptory summons from the hospital, and in less than an hour was on my way with a doctor to New Rochelle, a town on the New Haven Railroad, half an hour's ride from the city.

"The family to which you are going," said my companion on the train, "consists of mother and son. The mother is the pneumonia patient. I am not her physician. He is all. I am a substitute. Let me warn you not to be browbeaten out of your regular price. Mrs. Wright is notorious for her parsimony, but she is very wealthy. Her son is a glum fellow. She has the shackles on him, I can tell you. She doles out his money as if he were a schoolboy."

I recognized the son the moment I laid my eyes on him. He was a medical student at the Vanderbilt College. During my six months' service at the Sloane Maternity Hospital, which was a requisite to obtaining any diploma from the New York Hospital, I had seen him frequently as a physicians' assistant. I disliked his immovable face and his cool, business-like treatment of a patient, so singular in a beginner.

His face—still, clerical, spectacled—is before me now as I looked upon it when he met me at his door, as I was destined to look upon it a few months later (Heaven pity me!) on the cover of a notorious blue pamphlet, which at that time was the chief attraction of the city news stands.

Whatever his mother's stinginess he never let me feel it. I had *carte blanche* for all the appurtenances of the sick-room. I could burn my alcohol lamp without stinting its fuel. I could revel in a wealth of bed-linen and towels. I could indulge, with no thought of laundry cost, in a love of freshness in my hospital uniform of blue cambric dress, white cap, white neckerchief and white apron.

My patient, poor soul, was as docile a creature as ever a nurse handled. She responded to my care in a way that thrilled me with a sense of power. I forgot my own fatigue as my hand swept up and down her aching body and soothed her into sleep.

She was too sick to consider the expense about her, but she gave me a curious inkling of her character. Her son had been assisting me one evening with some alterations in the bed. I was kneeling on a foot-bench at its side. A hospital medal dangled over her from a ribbon round my neck. She was drowsing, and her right hand closed round the medal so that I could not remove it.

Adrian Wright looked at me with an ironical smile I thought unkind, took a quarter of a dollar from his vest-pocket, and rubbed it slowly over his mother's hand. She dropped the medal and seized upon the quarter without rousing.

Another day, those greedy fingers held a lozenge in a clutch that flattened it out as if it had been pounded. Next, they crushed my thermometer, at a time when I was eagerly filling out my bedside notes for the doctor with a record of decided improvement in temperature.

I prided myself on my bandaging, but I had an ugly little wound to dress in the palm of Mrs. Wright's hand. When I had attended to it, I left Adrian in charge and went to the village to replace the thermometer.

The bedroom had no egress but through a room on each side of it. One of these, a dressing-room, opened on the main hall of the house. The other, which had been arranged for my sleeping room, opened on a back hall and staircase. I returned that way and was startled to hear Mrs. Wright speaking in a loud voice.

"My boy! My boy!" I heard her say. "Can't you trust your mother? You know it is for your good in the end."

Angry with her son for bringing up money matters and disturbing her improved condition, I was about enter-

ing the room to use my authority when he answered her quietly. What he said I did not hear, but she began to repeat after him immediately, the psalm for the sick:

"I look for the Lord—
I look for the Lord.
My soul doth wait for him—
My soul doth wait for him
In his word is my trust."

The mother did not respond.

"In his word is my trust," Adrian repeated in the gentlest voice in the world; but his mother was sleeping.

I sat on the edge of my bed facing the crack of my door which led into the bedroom and which had been pushed to. As the sick woman became motionless I saw Adrian rise, take an unused box of sleeping powders from the table by the bed, and go softly into the dressing-room. He emptied the contents of the papers into an envelope and replaced them with a powder from a bottle which he had taken out of his pocket.

It will be remembered that on his trial he was at first supposed to have procured at a college lecture the opiate for the crime of which he was convicted. May the heavenly Father, whose thoughts of mercy are greater than we can conceive, have mercy upon such as I who showed no mercy!

When Adrian had replaced the box of powders on the table in the bedroom, he went for an instant through the dressing-room into the main hall. In that instant I secured the plundered box.

With his prayer ringing in my ears as the blasphemy of a hypocrite, I retraced my steps to the village. I went to a drug store across the street from the one where the prescription had been filled.

"Will you tell me the nature of these powders?" I asked.

The druggist smelt and delicately tasted paper after paper; looked at me quizzically, and retired with the box to the end of the store. He came back smiling.

"Whether self-raising or self-righteous, I cannot tell," he said, "but certainly nothing but flour. Are you going to deceive a hypochondriac?"

"Kindly keep them till I call for them," I answered.

I took the box and renewed the prescription at the opposite drug store. I returned home, leaving the seeds of suspicion which secured the death sentence of Adrian Wright, suspicion which I afterward in vain endeavored to silence.

Adrian's defence upon his trial was that the physician attending his mother was a stranger who did not understand her constitution; that he, himself, seriously disfavored the administration to her of opium, and, to avoid controversy, had substituted flour for the opiate which he denied giving and which he claimed to have burned.

I had come up weary to New Rochelle, uncertain of any fitness for my profession. I had had there a delightful vision of success. I had undergone a cruel shock. I longed to be away. I feared I knew not what.

As if my nursing had linked her to my emotions, that evil day of my discovery my patient suffered a relapse. The doctor, coming in, found her breathing painfully—apparently

from her old asthmatic trouble. He decided to relieve her with a single drop of morphine. Adrian was not present.

The doctor charged his morphine needle, examined the sick woman carefully, thought her easier, and concluded to delay the injection, promising to call again when he had made other visits. And he kept his promise.

Alas! While he was away, his patient had fallen into a profound sleep from which it had been impossible to rouse her. Her labored breathing echoed through the house. She had sufficiently overcome her attack of pneumonia to have already sat up several times. The doctor ordered her now to be walked up and down the room.

We struck those poor bent shoulders with wet towels. We plied hot water to those nerveless feet just slipping over Jordan. We strove to arrest their going with oxygen and an electric battery. All in vain.

The unfortunate woman died, it was proved, of opium poisoning. Yet, among his visits the doctor had lost his morphine needle from its case. It had not been applied to her. The sleeping-powders were untouched, as I had brought them from the drug-store.

And Adrian, after the opportunity I had given him, by my return to the village, of using his envelope of poison, had sat for two hours at his mother's side, silently watching her pass from life to eternity. As I saw him lavish every tenderness upon her, the mark of self-control fallen from his face, I could have screamed aloud. I, only I, knew the secret of the powders.

For ten years I have been the unworthy—yes, with all my heart and life at his command, still unworthy—wife of Adrian Wright. When the sentence of death was pronounced upon him, to silence my frantic solicitations, his mother's body was disinterred for re-examination.

That close right hand of hers, which had looked so pathetic in her coffin, had somewhat relaxed in a muscular convulsion after death. In its palm was the lost morphine needle.

Her restless fingers had found it, where the doctor had forgotten it, on the table by the bed. A crack was in it where her tight hold had crushed it. The break had made a tiny opening in the thermometer wound for the morphine to enter. Her son was right about the effect of narcotics upon her. She had died by her own grasping hand.

In humiliation and thanksgiving, I write this confession for my children.

The Rattler

BY J. HAROLD HERRMANN

Bribed by Devil Flynch, the half-breed hides a snake in Curly Walsh's cot. The snake strikes the wrong person, and ....

OUT on the sun-scorched prairie, the half-breed crept, armed with leather bag and forked stick. Dwarf cactuses abounded, and sage grew in extensive patches.

Moving about cautiously, his black eyes searched the sunbaked trail, the very crevice hid in the underbrush. He knew where to find them, and the squirming mass in the bag told of his dexterity in bagging them. Seventeen times had he pinned the squat heads, with their bead-like eyes, to the rock, deftly to raise and deposit them in the bag. It was a lucky day!

He sold them to a druggist in town, who extracted the poison for purposes of which John knew not and cared little, but who paid in cash, which enabled him to purchase the white man's curse, the Indian's ruin—whiskey.

Emerging from the sage brush—it was hot even for an Indian—he threw the bag, securely tied with leather thongs, beside him, and sat down upon a low boulder overlooking the wagon path.

In the distance, where it issued from a group of buttes, a man appeared on a pony. The half-breed knew the man approaching at a furious gallop. He spied the swarthy one on the rock, swung his pony around, and came up at a trot.

"What're ye doin' here, John?" he he queried, gruffly.

"Nothin', Devil Flynch. Jes' resting—tired." For further elucidation he pointed to the bag. "Been workin'."

"Snakes?"

John nodded, chewing a wisp of hay. Then he asked amusedly:

"Been over to the Brakes? Curly Walsh lives there. Guess Curly must've driven ye off, by the way ye were riding!"

"Damn it—he did, John. Had his gun up before I could git mine. Told me he'd blow me full of holes if my cattle didn't stay away from his dam. Ye know the drought is on; there isn't a drop of water in the 'crick'!"

But the half-breed knew it was not the drought, water or cattle that caused the hot blood to rise between them. It was a woman, and the prettiest woman in that region of barrenness and ruthless men. As matters stood, John wouldn't give the proceeds from his bag of snakes for the life of either man. He laughed, as he thought how little they knew the power of an Indian's penetration.

"Why don't ye lay for him, some night, Flynch? A shot at him when he's in bed, through the window—"

"No. This country isn't what it used to be, John, to get away with a thing like that."

"Why not creep up, then, and burn the crazy shack, Curly and all? He'd be gone—nobod'd know—accident. He might've turned over the light!"

The other thought, and decided he didn't like the idea.

"Everybody knows there's no love wasted 'tween Curly and me. No, it wouldn't do."

Big Devil Flynch dismounted and seated himself next to John.

"I'll git even with him—mark me! What d'ye git for them wrigglers, John?" and he furtively touched the bag.

The half-breed read read the purpose in his eyes, and yawned.

"Two bits for the lot. Ye want me to git rid of Curly for ye, Flynch? Ye want John to hide a snake in his bed, for company? Well, I might, an' I mightn't—depends. What's in it for poor John?"

"Did ye ever see a 'buck' for your outfit?"

"No, but I might see two bucks, better. I'll git ye one for Curly, specially, Flynch. Ye see, these fellers might not do—they're little over two feet. What ye want is a nice, big poison fang, say about four. I'll git ye one—leave it to John!"

Flynch dropped a "buck" into the sinuous hand.

"There's one. You'll git the other after Curly's met Poison Fang!"

The half-breed gloated over it, then laughed after Flynch, as he parted on his pony.

He bagged the one that was to strike Curly—a huge, ugly looking reptile, with a string of horny rattles attached to the earthy body.

Securely tied in the bag, he carried it through the gathering dusk to the shack of the woman that was the cause of so much bad blood between the men. It was a long way, but the moon was out, and his bare feet had long become inured to the prick of the cactus.

Arrived, he squatted where he knew she must see him from her window.

"What are ye doin' out there, John?" sang out her penetrating voice, once she laid eyes on the intruder.

"Have ye somethin' to eat, Meg?" raising a weather-beaten hat in mock courtesy. "I've not eaten all day—sure ye've got somethin' for poor John?"

She curtly asked him in. She was wonderfully beautiful, as she set about cutting some bread, to which she added a slice of salt pork. Tall, straight, wild and untamed, with dark, defiant eyes, as became a woman grown up away from civilization.

His sparkling eyes followed her voluptuous form with a brutish lear of appreciation.

"You're about as nasty a fellow as is your white father, Teg Lynn, down at 'Crick' cabin. Take your eyes off, this moment!" and she moved for the rifle that hung above her cot, her deliberate manner betraying she knew how to use it.

"Have ye got any money in the house?" he asked, after finishing the crude repast. "I've done poorly these days, Meg," and he kicked the bag at his feet contemptuously.

"Ye take yourself off, beggar!"

Again there was the move for the weapon. He raised his hand detainingly.

"Don't do it! Poor John must beg money, these days. One snake in three days, and Teg, my white father, won't give me a penny. Give me two bits an' I'll tell ye somethin'."

"I heerd enough of ye, beggar—and must be about my work!"

"But it's about Devil Flynch layin' for Curly Walsh to leave for Yellow River, to git some horses! Mebbe he wants to fire Curly's shack."

As he intended, he had hit the mark. She flushed at the men's names, then spoke defiantly.

"Ye tell Devil Flynch as there'll be somebody to watch Curly's shack while he's gone to-morrow night. Tell him to stay away, there are bullets at night that might put a stop to all his wretched meddlin'!"

No doubt she loved Curly and hated Flynch, and between these two that were so important in her life, stood the half-breed, despised, homeless, with wishes of his own.

"Give me two bits, Meg!"

Evading his covetous gaze, she got the money and gave it to him, he bowing cringingly. Then grasping his bag:

"Thank ye, lady, thank ye handsomely," he said. "I'll tell Devil—yep. Mebbe he'll be glad to have such fine company, when he do come."

But she drove him off.

Tired as he was, he trudged undismayed through the moonlight that illuminated the vast country for miles and miles. Over stubble and barren rock, through patches of sage, winding in and out among the dwarf hills, he finally mounted the ridge where Curly's ramshackle dwelling stood, built like the eagle's eyrie in the cliff above the brakes.

Here he squatted through the long hours of the night, smoking his blackened pipe. The snake moved uneasily in the bag, possibly from hunger, which served John's purposes well. He had a surprise in that bag for Curly, whom he hated as much as did Devil Flynch, if more cautiously.

He chuckled inwardly at these two white men playing into his hands. Here he was, by order of Flynch, about to do away with his rival, by means of old Poison Fang in the bag, who strikes unerringly and never speaks. He patted the bag affectionately. Curly once out of the way, it was a toss-up whom the woman hated most, Flynch or himself. Besides, John was not going to abide by her decision. Why had he employed the falsehood that Flynch was coming to burn out Curly's eyrie? Because he knew the woman would come the long way to prevent it. She would be there conveniently for the half-breed to carry off, with or without her consent. He knew a refuge, so hidden in the barren hills that he might enjoy his prize, many days, unmolested.

With the dawn, noises issued from the shack, and soon the occupant stepped out—a gigantic man, rough and uncouth, just the type to appeal to a woman like Meg. He looked down the slope to where his pony was grazing, when he spied the half-breed coming toward him, bag in hand.

"Give me a buck, Curly!"

Curly tossed the coin to him.

"There ye are, if ye stop sneakin' around the shack!"

"Goin', Curly, goin'. Must be off to town, to git my money for the snakes I've got. Won't meddle around here, an' thank ye, very much!"

Curly caught and saddled the pony, and soon John accompanied him down the trail to where it crosses the wagon path that led to the town.

"If ye're going to Yellow River, let John tell ye, don't tarry long," he gabbled. "Devil Flynch says he's goin' down, and there'll be jes' one comin' back if he meets ye."

"Jes' ye stay away from the shack, an' never mind what Flynch says. Likely, there'll be jes' one of us returnin', but his name won't be Devil Flynch, take my word!"

"I'm glad to hear it, Curly—for your sake. So glad, I've a notion to sit an' wait for ye."

"Right ye are! Ye jes' hang around tomorrow at this time, an' see me corral the new horses."

They parted, Curly following the trail, the half-breed ostentatiously striking the wagon path.

When the sound of the hoofs died in the distance, he halted, and retraced the weary way to the shack.

Creeping up, he raised the window and entered, having dropped the bag before him. The gray dawn was sufficient to show him the cot in the corner covered with an old army blanket.

He approached, drew back the covering, and seizing the head of the writhing serpent through a fold of the leather, until he might securely grip the sinuous neck, he carefully deposited it on the cot, tucking in the blanket so as to prevent its escape. Then he left by the way he entered.

He stayed away all that day, but with the dawn of the next, he was back to see Curly return. Curly came with his drove of horses, and having coralled them, entered the shack, the picture of a tired man. The half-breed knew he would at once take to the cot, but he lurked about in his hiding place for quite another hour. Curly didn't show any more, and the grinning wretch ran down the slope, across the prairie, to tell Devil Flynch of his success.

"Here's the other buck," said Flynch. "When the moon is up tonight, we'll go and see Curly."

The night came, and with it the moon. Together, the two men glided over the silent country, until Curly's eyrie rose silhouetted against the lighter sky.

Stealthily they crept up, to peep in the window. To their surprise a light was burning on the table. Upon the cot sat Curly, older looking, pale and haggard, staring at the face of a dead woman lying in his lap. Beneath an overturned chair lay what seemed to be the battered body of the rattler.

Their faces glued against the pane, the two stood petrified at this unexpected sight.

"Let's be goin', John," whispered Flynch. But Curly, looking up, had already seen the blanched faces at the window. He raised the lifeless body in his arms, and stepped out.

"Here she is, ye dogs!" he said, as he placed her on the ground before them. Then, drawing a crumpled

paper from his pocket, he offered it to Flynch. There was the hasty scrawl of a woman's hand on it, which read:

I've been watchin' your shack, las' night. The Half-breed hinted that Devil Flynch might try some mischief while ye're gone. His luck kept him away.

It's dawn, an' I'm going. He won't try nothin' during the day. Kiss this paper, which ye'll find under the cover on the cot,—I did.

Meg.

The woman's face gazed stark-eyed into the moonlight. Upon the well-rounded arm, the bite was plainly to be seen.

The half-breed threw himself over it, to suck the poison from the wound. Curly laughed a mirthless laugh.

"Ye fool—she's been dead these last twelve hours!" Then, suddenly fixing his eyes upon his rival, he added: "I know there's no law can hold ye for this, but ye're guilty, or ye wouldn't be around. There hasn't been a killing in this country in years! Roger Mallon was the last to die in his boots—Devil Flynch—ye wolf! I'll fight ye for her body!"

And they fought, fought as great, brutalized men of the West will fight, tooth and nail, to a finish.

For a moment, perhaps, the half-breed waited, but when he saw his accomplice slowly borne to the ground by the just wrath of the smaller man, fear clutched him. Followed by the cries of the two, as they swayed back and forth, he fled, never to escape the dead woman's haunting face, however.

Requiescat in Pace

BY ELLIOTT McELDOWNEY

Ever have any creepy sensations when a blue-coated cop happened to walk toward you? The moral of the story is, don't be curious under such conditions.

DOWN the street, across from me, was strolling the ponderous, blue-coated figure of a policeman.

Fate nudged Imagination.

"What," thought I, "would happen if I should suddenly break into a run? Would that fat, sleepy-looking guardian of the peace pretend he didn't see me, and continue on his somnolent way, or would he turn and start in pursuit? And, if he did, would he command me to halt, and then fire his revolver into the air and wake up the whole neighborhood, bring other blue-coats to the scene, and cause a big disturbance? Maybe bring reporters from downtown looking for a story, then find he had been fooled, and be the joke of the town the next morning—or what would happen?" So my brain ran on. That wasn't so bad, and everything would have been all right but—

Fate nudged Curiosity. Curiosity pinched me and I started down the street on the dead run.

The policeman fooled me. He turned on his heel as I broke into a run—I made enough noise to arouse him and give Curiosity a chance—and started hot-foot after me. In a moment, his revolver was out and he was blazing away at me. He didn't shout any warning and he didn't fire into the air, for I heard a bullet go smack against the brick wall near my head and another chip the walk beside me. Curiosity was getting her fill.

I couldn't think what to do. If I stopped I knew it would mean, at the least, a night on a cell cot. And I was afraid he might forget to stop shooting and bury a few of those police bullets in me, so I ran all the harder. "If I only could get around the next corner," I thought. I got around all right, but as I did so my foot caught in an iron grating in front of a delicatessen store and I sprawled full length. A moment later, I passed off into unconsciousness to the tune of a night stick on my skull. Curiosity had been amply satisfied.

I came around in a minute or two. Then I was dragged to my feet and started back along the avenue. There was a police call box on the next corner and I guessed that was where we were headed for. Neither one of us was saying a word—I realized I might as well keep my mouth shut—and had got back down the street about three doors on the other side of where I had broken into a run, when Fate dealt her knock-out blow.

As we passed one of the tall brownstone houses which line the street, a

door at the head of a brownstone stoop was jerked open and a man clad in a nightshirt staggered out on to the porch. When he saw us he called something unintelligible and, clutching the railing, started down the steps. He lost his balance and fell forward. Like a drunken man, he rolled drown the steps, ending up prostrate at the foot. My captor dragged me toward him.

As we got to his side, he struggled to his feet, with the help of the steps, and stood swaying in front of us. I started back in horror, as I saw by the light of the corner arc that the whole front of his nightshirt was soaked in blood. His long, unkempt beard was matted with blood, and he dashed more blood from his eyes as he turned to us.

He reeled as he stood, but recovered himself somewhat, as the officer reached to help him. Then, with one hand clutching wildly at his throat and the other pointing a blood-stained finger straight in my face, he cried out, "Thank God, you got him." As I started back, he reeled again and fell forward at our feet. He shivered once, rolled awkwardly over until his face, all blood and horrible looking, was turned to the sky, then lay still.

At that moment, three other policemen arrived on the run. My captor drew a pair of handcuffs from his hip pocket and slipped them over my wrists.

"Take him and hold him. Quick!" he shouted. "He's killed this man. Shoot if he tries to break."

Two officers, each twice my weight, trained on me wicked-looking revolvers, while the one who had caught me bent over the man on the walk. I know I went pale, and I felt my hair go up as he finished his examination and rose to his feet.

"He's dead, all right," he said.

It wasn't until I stood before the precinct station captain and realized he was demanding to know my name, that I recovered my wits.

"Garrick Temple," I answered in a weak little voice I hardly recognized. I knew that with a charge of murder against me it would be idiocy to try to hide under an alias. My head went giddy and I put my hand to my forehead. It felt wet. I looked at my hand and found it half covered with blood. I shuddered as I thought of the other blood. Then I remembered my hand had come down when I fell on what I thought at the time was a broken bottle. The night stick had knocked all thoughts of it out of my head.

Weakly, I answered all the captain's questions. I was twenty-six, I told him, born in Kansas City, unmarried, color white and occupation a newspaper man.

"What paper?" he asked, and his voice seemed to have lost a little of its aggressiveness. He was apparently disappointed, and a little relieved, I think, when I admitted I wasn't connected with any at the moment.

Then I had to go through the formality of being weighed and standing against a measuring stick while they got my height. I had been thoroughly searched at first and every last thing taken from my pockets. Every article was put away in an envelope that I didn't see again for months. Lastly, he noted down my appearance,

the condition of my clothes, where the torn places were and the blood spots. At last I was turned over to the doorman with orders to be locked up.

"And keep a watch on him," growled the captain.

It was then about three A.M.

Those first few hours in a cell passed some way—I don't know how. My first caller—that morning about six o'clock—was a newspaper reporter. And it was from Phil—Phil Deston is now enshrined in my heart as my preserver and my dearest friend—it was from Phil that I got my first gleanings of news. The story was splashed all over the front page of every morning paper in town, he told me. His own paper—the Gazette—had my picture played up two columns across with a three-column head. Their man had been with the detectives who had ransacked my room shortly after I was locked up, and the front page had been made over to get in a cut of a post-card photo they had found in the bottom of my trunk.

"Who was the man?" I queried, after replying to Phil's questions.

"Great Scott, do you mean to say you don't know yet who you—that is, who was killed?" gasped my interviewer.

I assured him I had no idea.

"Holy Smokes! Say, promise me you won't let on to the other fellows you didn't know that little detail and you're my friend for life."

I promised hastily. He was welcome to his beat.

"It was James Collingwood Phillips."

It was my turn to gasp.

"The artist?"

'Sure."

Phillips had made a stir as a magazine illustrator a quarter of a century before, and some ten years later had won fame in oils. A number of his pictures had been hung in the Louvre and one of an ex-president adorned the White House. He had gained notoriety by his refusal to move from the house where he had been born to better quarters when his success came. Until Phil enlightened me, I had supposed the dead man to be some small tradesman of the neighborhood. I could see now why the newspapers had gone to the story so hard. I could see, also, how ominously things had shaped themselves for me.

Phil later admitted that for the first week he believed me guilty. The second week he was in great doubt. By the third week he was sitting up nights scheming how to prove me innocent—and I still shiver when I think where I might be if it hadn't been for Phil.

Money was the biggest question just then—money and the lack of friends. Aspinwall, the shifty, weazen-faced little lawyer whom Phil insisted I retain, got about the last of my little store with his retainer. It had been mighty little I had brought with me from Kansas City when my father's estate had been settled out there. As for my friends, I had absolutely none whom I could call on for aid. Both my parents were dead, and I hadn't a relative in the world—unless you could count a maiden aunt who had always insisted I was destined for a bad end. I had

made no close friends since leaving school. The kaleidoscopic shifting of faces in a newspaper office had prevented any real comradeship there.

Well, there is no use in going into detail over the events of the next few weeks. After the nervous wait for the finding of the grand jury—murder in the first degree, they said, as I had expected—I settled into a state of apathy. The trial was set for almost five weeks ahead. Each day became a replica of the preceding, and before a fortnight was gone I was sure I would go mad long before July 22, when they had calendared my trial. My only relaxations were conferences with Aspinwall and talks with the boys from the papers.

I think I realized from the beginning just how serious a scrape I was in. And it was enough to have worried any one. Even Aspinwall, whom I think really believed me innocent, admitted it looked like a hopeless case. In fact, there wasn't a shred of evidence in my favor. I couldn't see where I had a ghost of a show. The testimony of the policeman, with the dying words of Phillips, was enough to convict me. A broken window in the Phillips kitchen was assigned as the source of my cuts. I had been in too big a hurry to escape, they said. Couple all this with my inability to make out any kind of an alibi and you can see where I stood. I had spent the two hours previous to my capture wandering about the docks thinking of Kansas City, and I didn't remember seeing a soul those whole two hours.

It was along toward the latter part of June that Phil strolled in one day with a nonchalant cigarette between his lips and informed me that he had made up his mind I must have a detective—the best in the country.

"You bet; that's right," I agreed. "And have you discovered a society of sleuths for the aid of innocent but indigent criminals? Or have you induced the prosecuting attorney to furnish the necessary funds?"

"Nope, neither," said Phil, easily. "I've decided to assume the role myself. I've decided to go out and dig up the evidence which shall cast the mantle of ignominy from your innocent shoulders."

I didn't feel any more like joking that day than usual. "What's the gag?" I asked.

"Just that," snapped Phil. "I'm going to free you. Now, if you don't feel like being funny, just sit down and go over this whole thing with me once more. I want it all, down to the finest detail. If Phillips was murdered, somebody must have murdered him. The police, and most everybody else, think you did. I don't. So I'm going to find out who did."

Of course I couldn't do anything but humor Phil. And then it seemed possible he might turn up a clue. I guess I even allowed myself to feel some hope after our conversation, he was so confident.

Phil went about the thing systematically. Some way or other he got an interview with the widow—she had been in bed ever since the shooting—but he didn't learn anything. I guess he had a theory she might have killed Phillips herself, but he abandoned it when he first saw her, very near to death herself. Next he tackled the

servants: quizzed the cook, the maid, and the man of general work, until they threatened to call the police. After the servants, he started in on the neighbors. He spent six days putting a multitude of questions to every man, woman and child in the vicinity, who had ever heard of Phillips—and a hundred or more who hadn't, I guess. He knew more about the private life of Phillips than the artist had himself when he got through—and he hadn't unearthed a clue.

He tried to have the commissioner discharge Margot, the policeman who had fired at me without warning. He started this in a spirit of revenge when the prosecutor's office refused him any assistance, but it got us nothing. The man was brought on the carpet and told a story of seeing someone prowling about the Phillips house earlier in the evening. He swore he had heard a shot two or three minutes before I started to run, and that he felt the case demanded swift action. The commissioner agreed with him, and gave him a pat on the shoulder instead of stripping his buttons. Phil redoubled his efforts to find some clue, but each morning when he called to see me it was to report nothing.

When the week of the trial dragged itself around, I was utterly without hope. I knew there wasn't one chance in a million of my getting off. Indeed, I had no defense. Even Aspinwall's shifty brain had fallen down on the job. There was nothing to do but tell the truth and take a chance, he said. He swore I should never go to the chair. He declared he could drag things along for years, if necessary. And that was all the consolation he could give me.

During the three days of the trial —Aspinwall put up a better fight than expected and strung things along— Phil showed up in court only once. But when the foreseen verdict of murder in the first degree finally came in after half a day's balloting— I learned afterward that one juror had held out, insisting I was insane —Phil was beside me, my only friend. He grasped my hand just before they led me back to my cell and begged me to stay game.

"I'll get you out, yet, old man," he whispered fiercely. I paid little attention to him.

Three days later, I was sentenced to die in the electric chair on November 13. My nerve was completely gone. I just existed from then on. I didn't even think. Sometimes at night, when I crawled into my cot in the death chamber, I would wonder dully what I had done all day. I never could remember. I knew Aspinwall was fighting with all the methods at his command to stall off my execution, but I didn't care. I believe I even resented it in a stupid, half animal way. I wanted to get the whole miserable business done with. That Phil was still working for me, I knew, too. But I had lost all hopes I ever had of his assistance. Just the same, he kept at it all through that blazing summer.

Things droned along this way through the early fall and into November. I might as well have been dead and buried so far as any interest in life went. I dimly knew that the thirteenth was just a little way off,

and I instinctively felt that I would come to and play the thing out like a man when the time came, but meanwhile, I could only exist.

And then one morning, shortly before noon, while I was sitting on the edge of my cot gazing through the bars at nothing, Phil dashed along the corridor to my cell, shouting as soon as he came in sight of me:

"You're free, Temple, you're free; they've got the right man."

I was on my feet, my head pressed against the bars, when he got to me.

"It's all over, old man," he cried excitedly, as he grabbed my hands in his and shook them through the steel. "The murderer has confessed. They are going to let you out. It's all over; think of it!"

I could only sink back on my cot. The thing had come so suddenly I was overwhelmed. I could hardly grasp the meaning of his message. Free! Free! Lord, the word almost had ceased to mean anything to me. It must have been fully five minutes before I got over the first shock. And then I went wild with joy. I was all unnerved, out of my senses. I whooped and hollered in my excitement, and only calmed down finally through excess of emotion.

The first practical evidence of the truth of Phil's assertions came while he was with me. I was taken from my stuffy little cell to one of the rooms upstairs reserved for offices. It was here Phil sat down and told the whole story; but only after the prosecutor had paid me a visit in person. In a few stilted phrases he assured me of his happiness in this late proof of my innocence, and wished me all the luck in the world. He also let me know, gently, that I would not be released at once—there would be some necessary formalities to attend to first.

It was a letter—an illy scrawled, mis-spelled missive on a scrap of dirty yellow paper—that slit the shroud Death was weaving for me and let me slip out into the world. Here it is, as Phil copied it that first day from the original in the hands of the police:

Police station, Gents:

I can't stand it no longer. The man you got locked up redy to kill Friday ain't the man who killed the other man. I killed him. I ain't got much longer to liv and I'm going to square this thing up if its the last thing I do on earth. Send to 11 Blucher third flight up the rear room and get the whol story.

Alexander Napason.

Phil had been at headquarters when the letter came in the mail that morning. He told me his paper had scored a beat on it; played it up four columns across on the first page. Phil had privileges around headquarters that no other newspaper man in town shared, it seemed.

Phil was one of the party that was on its way to 11 Blucher Street fifteen minutes after the letter came in. They found the two upper flights at that number to be a disreputable rooming-house over a cheap clothing store. Napason was lying in awful squalor on a mass of clothing in one corner of the attic-like room. There was one little broken window overlooking a back yard. He was in the very last stages of consumption. The detectives sent for a doctor and a stenographer, and when they found he wasn't in any immediate danger of passing off, got his story.

He confessed the whole thing, told how he had made a living for years by burglary, and showed clippings of crimes he had committed and never been arrested for. He had a whole box of clippings on the Phillips case. He explained how he had got into the house, described the lay-out of the place, and told how he had been caught by Phillips, coming downstairs to the dining room in his nightshirt and finding him at the silver. He shot him without a moment's hesitation. He said he had to do it to save his own life. He said he had cut himself making a hurried exit through the rear window. That explained the blood spots on the sill, which they had ascribed to me. He confessed he had not felt any sorrow at my plight until I had been condemned, and then he had begun to be troubled. But he had put off writing the letter until the last week and then had begged a stamp to mail it with.

The letter and Napason's confession gave a blow to the prosecutor's office from which it could not recover. Every resource was exhausted to prove the confession a hoax, but investigation only helped my case. No friends or relatives of Napason could be found, although advertisements were inserted in every paper in addition to the wide publicity given the story on the front pages. Several bartenders of the neighborhood were found through Phil's efforts, who testified that the dying man had frequented their places during the winter and summer. They swore they had seen him often in conversation with known crooks.

Most of this sleuthing, of course, was done after I had been released. But during the two days I was held after the dying man's letter was received, every stone was overturned to find an excuse for holding me. But my nightmare was ended. On the morning of November eighth, I found myself going down the steps of the Tombs with Phil holding to my arm and bracing me up, and a whole streetful of people cheering me.

Directly after my release, a plain envelope came in the mail to police headquarters with $25 in it for Napason. A note accompainied it to the effect that $25 would follow each week Napason lived. The money was to be used in any way he might direct. From another source—the police could never trace either—$20 came in weekly with similar instructions. Both writers said they believed Napason's sacrifice deserved some reward. Phil scored another scoop on all the papers in town with his story of these remittances.

As a result of these mysterious beneficences, Napason passed away in a private room of one of the city's great hospitals. A policeman was dozing outside the door when a nurse tiptoed out and told him his vigil had ended, his prisoner had escaped.

I was on the staff of the Gazette with Phil—that was another of the miracles he brought to pass—when the police saw the last of Napason. The night after the funeral, Phil dropped into my room. I was still trying to get my mind off things by spending all my spare time in reading.

"I've decided to put up a monument to Napason," were the first words Phil said, after he had slouched

into a chair, put his feet on the window sill and a pipe in his mouth. I let my chair come to the floor with a bang. I had come to feel what I owed to Napason's confession in the weeks that had gone by. But my thanks had always been tempered with the knowledge that, after all, this shifty consumptive had been the cause of all my troubles. And he'd surely caused Phil enough, too.

"It will cost $350," he went on composedly, before I had a chance or the wit to exclaim. It will be erected in Woodlawn cemetery, will be of brown granite, will have an angel on top and the words, 'Requiescat in Pace,' on the base. It will stand six feet high —if $350 will do it."

"What's the joke," I queried. This didn't sound like Phil's brand of humor.

"Isn't any," said he.

"Well, I pass; what's the idea?"

Phil took his pipe slowly from his mouth and turned his chair around until it faced mine.

"I guess it is about time you knew," he said deliberately, while I stared. "You can't do any harm now by losing your head." He emptied his pipe into his hand, then methodically rapped the bowl on his shoe.

"The $350—it's on deposit with a trust company now—and the $45 a week was the price of that little letter that woke up the town five weeks ago. Remember it, don't you?" He smiled as he refilled his pipe.

"Do you mean—" I began.

"Yep."

I sank back, my head in a daze.

"There isn't a bit of need to worry," Phil assured me. "Every string is tied—and sealed. There's not a thing the police or anyone else can prove, even if they suspected. Napason's as dead as last summer."

Then he told me the story in detail. He had exhausted every effort in an attempt to trace the real criminal. When he couldn't find him, he had manufactured him. He explained to me with fascinating detail how he had spent eight solid weeks in searching the hospitals, the missions, the cheap lodging houses, and even stopped men on the street, in his quest for the right character to come through with a confession of the Phillips murder. He had discovered Napason draining a glass of beer in a water-front saloon. When he found that the half-dead tubercular had been nourishing a crazy desire to have a monument with a Latin inscription over his grave—he was facing the potter's field without a friend in the world—the rest was easy. It only meant money. The finding of the newspaper clippings of the Phillips case, apparently hoarded by Napason, had been a bit of stage business conceived by Phil, who had spent one whole week rehearsing the miserable wretch in the story he told the police.

"He had only a month or two to live, anyway," said Phil, "and he thought this would be a good way to spend it in comfort. He'd been a cheap crook all his life, and the glory he got from being thought a murderer —a self-sacrificing one at that—and being eternally guarded by the sovereign state of New York, meant something to him, too, I guess. But it was the monument that really landed him. In one of his long-ago periods of

work he'd been a grave digger. He never got over the imposing magnificence of some of those plutocratic sarcophaguses.

"And he was wise, too. He insisted that the money—he wanted a $500 tomb at first—be placed on deposit in his own name with a full and written understanding with the bank regarding the use the money was to be put to. He mapped out the whole specifications himself. He's even got an original diagram in the bank vault which he wants followed."

"But 'Requiescat In Pace'?" I queried. "How did he pick on that. He didn't know much English, let alone Latin, did he?"

"Oh, no," said Phil. "That was my part. All he wanted was some Latin dope. That 'In Pace' stuff was all I knew. By the way," he added, "what does it mean?"

Two years later a letter came to the police from the warden of a penitentiary in Iowa. A notorious criminal had died there recently, the letter ran, confessing on his last day that it was he who killed John Collingwood Phillips. The police laughed at the letter—and forgot it. They knew who killed Phillips, they said.

The letter is one of my prized possessions. It links together in a full circle that chain of events which started when Fate nudged Imagination, then Curiosity.

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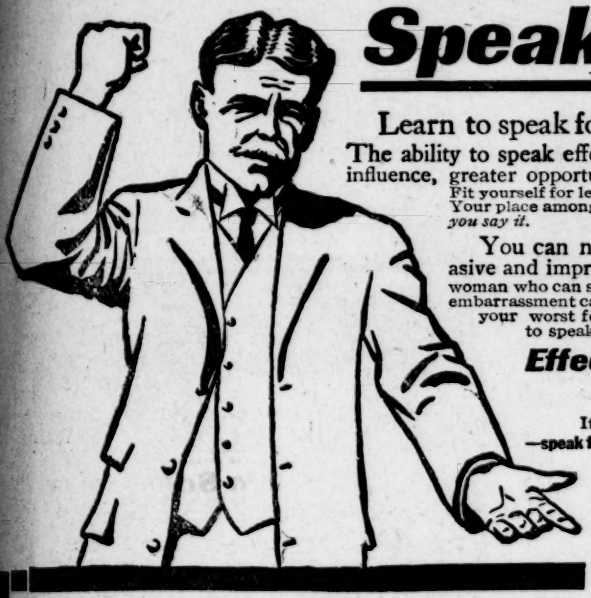

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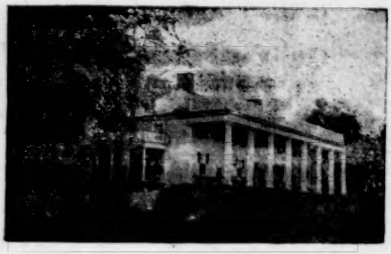

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